

In These Times

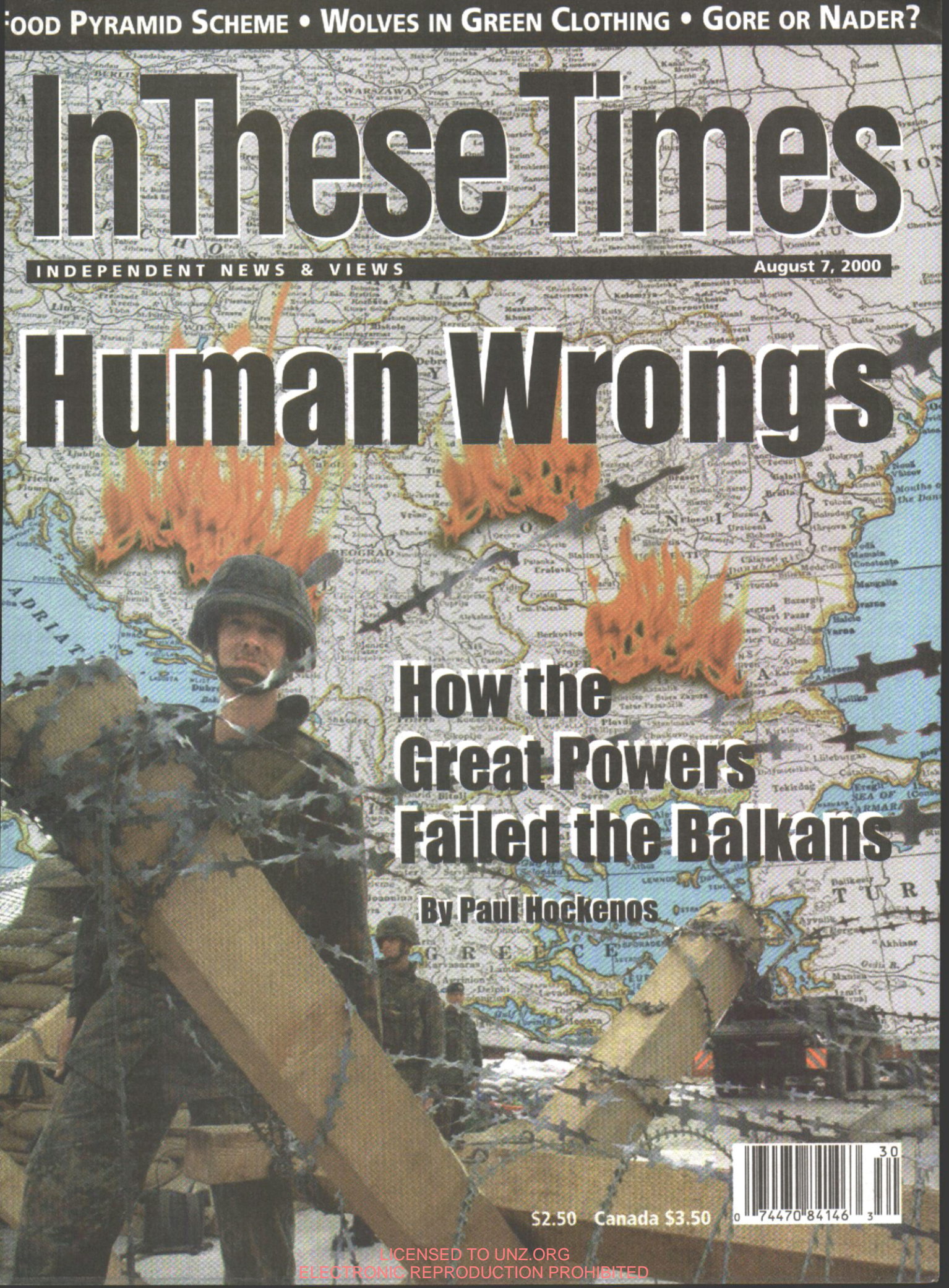
INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

August 7, 2000

Human Wrongs

How the Great Powers Failed the Balkans

By Paul Hockenos



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"... with liberty and justice for all"

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Letters

Gore or Nader?

Where exactly is it called a "two-party system"? I don't see any reference to a "two-party system" in the Constitution ("Face Reality," June 12).

If one was watching the debate over trade with China, particularly the bits where Bill Clinton and Tom DeLay stood side-by-side while praising this bill, it is clear that we don't have two parties in this country anymore. We have one party with the same corporate backers that simply runs two candidates to give the illusion of choice. Al Gore and George W. Bush have virtually identical positions on almost every issue that I care about, from foreign policy to military spending to trade.

I would have loved to see a progressive run in the Democratic primary. I was among many who were urging Paul Wellstone to run in that race. But to me, the wise course is to take the enthusiasm for a Nader campaign, combine it with the disgust over the prospect of Gore representing the closest thing to a progressive choice, and use that to build a grassroots political movement in this country.

If Gore loses this election because the Democrats' grassroots base has left the party, perhaps the party will reverse direction and return to its roots. Or if Nader gets sufficient votes to qualify the Green Party as a national party, then it can continue to build a grassroots political movement for the next presidential election.

I consider both of those outcomes preferable to President Gore, who would use his incumbency to block any progressive participation in the Democratic primaries in 2004. If we go down that road, then 2004 will be as bleak a presidential season as 2000 was before Nader started injecting some life into this campaign.

Marc Schuler
Atlanta

I expected more from *In These Times* than a back-handed endorsement of Al Gore.

Face reality? The reality is that I live in a state that has only voted for the Democratic presidential candidate four times in the 20th century (1912, 1932, 1936 and 1964). I'm not about to feel guilty for voting for a left presidential candidate if that person makes it past Indiana's draconian ballot laws. I don't know whether to vote for Ralph Nader or the Socialist Party's David McReynolds. But my vote will definitely not be for Gore.

The real outrage is the two-party dictatorship that controls the electoral process in this country through the ballot laws. While I agree that an independent political party's success lies through grassroots movements, the real key to this is through proportional representation.

Richard Clark
Salem, Indiana

Joel Bleifuss is entitled to his own opinions, but he is entirely unqualified to judge the motivations of those of us who intend to vote for Ralph Nader.

He says that one "votes for Nader to avoid tainting principles with the give-and-take of real politics." As I see it, the give-and-take is this: The Democratic Party is not giving me anything I want—therefore, I will take away my vote.

If Bleifuss is "serious about political change" (as he has taken the liberty of telling us that those who support Nader are not), perhaps he might enlighten us as to what political change he hopes to accomplish by once again forming the left's famous circular firing squad.

It is the Democratic Party that will have to face reality: By adopting the corporate agenda and giving up populist and progressive principles, they have lost the support of many of us who are paying attention.

Beverly Woods
Ossipee, New Hampshire

As a supporter of democratic ideals, multi-party systems and open debates, I was extremely angry to find another leftist editorial bashing the political tactics of a third-party candidate for president. If Joel Bleifuss spent more of his progressive political clout endorsing a presidential candidate rather than tearing them down, then maybe there would be a stronger third party on a national level by now.

There is no doubt that the trench work at the local level has begun to make a difference in pocket communities of independent voters, but why belittle efforts to bring progressive politics to the national level. Hello? Let's not forget "The Year of the Woman," which swept a record number of women into Washington thanks in large part to Emily's List, a national grassroots funding campaign.

Ralph Nader is serious about building up the political muscle of the Green Party. He is the only conscionable choice in the 2000 election, and with his help the Green Party will run strong candidates for the House and Senate in future elections. These potential candidates are flexing their political muscles as the grunts in this presidential campaign, which is an invaluable educational experience.

Face reality, Joel: The only thing keeping us from achieving our goals is people like you unwilling to believe we have the power to make our own political reality, one vote at a time.

Rini Kilcoyne
Worcester, Massachusetts

The left should focus on local elections in progressive strongholds where grassroots
Continued on page 25

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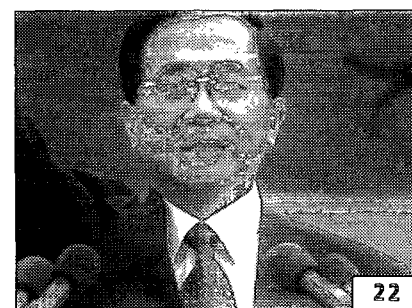
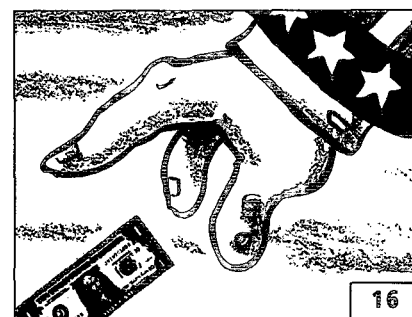
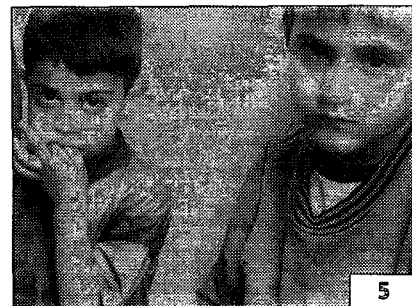
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Up to Snuff?

A debate over Project Censored simmers on the Web.

For 24 years, Project Censored has been doling out annual awards to the stories most ignored by the mainstream media.

For the past couple months, a debate over Project Censored has simmered on the Web. What is the role of the independent press in a society dominated by corporate media? What exactly constitutes censorship? A red pen wielded by an oppressive government or an editor who knows which topics to ignore in order to assure a bright professional future? Or is Project Censored just flogging stories that have failed on their own merits?

The debate was kicked off in March, when Don Hazen, former publisher of *Mother Jones* and now executive editor of AlterNet, a Web-based alternative news service in San Francisco, questioned the continued usefulness of Project Censored. Dan Simon and Greg Ruggiero of Seven Stories Press, which publishes *Censored*, the project's yearbook, responded. (Readers interested in the full exchange can find it at www.inthesetimes.com.) Others joined the discussion, including Project Censored 2000 winners Diana Johnstone (an *In These Times* contributing editor) and Karl Grossman.

Hazen has two main criticisms of Project Censored: The stories selected are not worthy of the attention given to them, and the underlying rationale of Project Censored is off-base.

"There are some very important stories among the Project Censored content every year. ... There are some lame ones as well," Hazen writes. "There is a thin line between good advocacy journalism and propaganda. ... The best way to avoid marginalizing our work is to have high standards woven into our passion and beliefs. For me these standards are not present in Project Censored."

As an example of Project Censored's "lack of credibility" Hazen mentions the article that was honored as the No. 1 most-censored story of 1999, the secret negotiations of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI). I wrote that story, "Building the Global Economy" (January 11, 1998).

MAI was an international treaty stealthily negotiated in Paris over several years that would have subordinated the right of elected governments to set national economic policy to the right of transnational corporations and investors to conduct business however they see fit. When I reported that story in December 1997, almost no one had heard of MAI. Activists at the Preamble Center, Public Citizen and the Program on Corporations, Law and Democracy were all trying to raise public awareness of the threats this treaty posed to Democratic government, but to little effect. The corporate media weren't interested in telling people about MAI, for good reason. This was a treaty that Renato Ruggerio, the former director general of the WTO, described as "the constitution for a new global economy." At the time my story went to press, MAI had only been mentioned in the *New York Times* once, in a letter to the editor. Censorship? I think so, subtle and insidious.



By Joel Bleifuss

One year after I wrote that article, while the Project Censored judges were going over and ranking the top 25 stories initially selected by the students and faculty at Sonoma State University in Rohnert Park, California, MAI, a treaty almost no one had ever heard of, died a quiet death.

In his critique of my article, Hazen writes, "Project Censored basically missed the story. According to global economic expert David Morris, a worldwide coalition of activists orga-

nized around anti-NAFTA and GATT campaigns helped to force the collapse of the so-called secret Multilateral Agreement on Investment negotiations."

If a "worldwide coalition of activists" had indeed managed to thwart the phalanx of transnational corporations and kill an international trade treaty like MAI, that would be huge news. But it didn't happen. The treaty negotiations fell apart because the French and, to a lesser extent, Canadian governments were adamantly opposed to treaty provisions that would have prevented them from protecting their native film and publishing industries from domination by American media conglomerates. For its part, the United States was not

"It is easy to be screwed by the mainstream media. We don't need to give awards for it."

— Don Hazen

going to support a trade treaty that left one of the largest American exports—entertainment—out of the mix.

Hazen also criticized two stories Project Censored honored earlier this year as also being "not up to snuff." He reports that the No. 6 story, "The Role of Caspian Sea Oil in the Balkan Conflict" by Diana Johnstone and published in the *Women Against Military Madness* newsletter, lacked "supporting evidence." He also cited the "dubious" No. 8 pick, "U.S. Violates World Law to Militarize Space" by Karl Grossman, which was published in *Earth Island Journal*.

Both Johnstone and Grossman published eloquent and lengthy defenses of their articles on the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* Web site (www.sfbg.com/censored-debate/), making the point that subsequent events have buttressed their original stories. Johnstone writes that earlier this year the United States committed \$588,000 to "a \$980,000 feasibility study" for an oil pipeline from the Caspian Sea through Bulgaria, Macedonia and Albania, with the rest of the money coming from the U.S.-based Albanian-Macedonian-Bulgarian Oil Company. Grossman reports that last November, when the U.N. General Assembly, in response to concerns about the U.S. military's plans for space-based

weapons systems, voted to reaffirm the provision of the Outer Space Treaty that says space shall be set aside "for peaceful purposes," the United States abstained. Further, the United States strongly opposes a current proposal by China to ban the deployment of "any weapons" in space.

In addition to the propensity to honor "lame" stories, Hazen believes Project Censored grants kudos to the wrong type of stories. "We in the progressive, independent media world are stuck in the past. Project Censored tends to reinforce fundamentally self-marginalizing, defeatist behavior," he writes. "In this media world the law of the jungle rules, and journalists and editors must fight tooth and nail, organizing, seducing, threatening, haranguing, to get their stories to center stage. We should not be celebrating the failure to get Project Censored stories out to larger audiences."

But isn't the whole idea of Project Censored to celebrate the independent press' gumption in publishing important stories that the mainstream press refuses to touch?

Hazen acknowledges the role self-censorship plays in the corporate press, but he says the independent press must do a better job of public relations. He writes, "What we need to do is invest time and resources in helping journalists get their important stories more attention, rather than sitting back and offering a Project Censored award as consolation."

"It is clear to me, as a person fighting for social change, that there is not a sufficient constituency willing to actively address societal problems. This constituency must be significantly expanded and some of that growth can be motivated by credible journalism," Hazen writes. "Social change is not achieved by crying wolf year after year. It's too easy to be screwed by the mainstream media; we don't need to give awards for it."

The independent press, Hazen says, needs a new set of awards—"the Project Big Audience Awards—recognition for stories dug out, documented, brilliantly rendered and expertly promoted so they get through the corporate media haze and become part of the public knowledge."

From Seven Stories Press in New York, Simon and Ruggiero replied to Hazen:

It would be a tragic mistake if we followed Don's advice and only celebrated writers who managed to shoehorn a progressive message into a mainstream package. ... Corporate media are always about markets, never about movements. Project Censored is about shaming the mainstream to change, while investing in the alternatives that can replace it. Giving awards to folks for publishing articles in 'big audience' venues is precisely what we don't need to do. ...

Getting a message or a story into the mainstream is a tactic, not a goal for independent media. We are not trying to move our message from left to center, but trying to build our own audience on the left. That's what makes us independent. When you concentrate on making it in the mainstream, you must conform to mainstream rules. When, instead, you invest resources and attention on the alternatives, you strengthen and consolidate them. That's the purpose of Project Censored: to demonstrate that the stories of most profound political,



social, and ecological import are being reported on *Democracy Now!* and in the pages of *In These Times*, not on the evening news, and to build larger audiences for those venues. ...

Hazen's approach would only contribute to the isolation and attrition of the independent press, a prize all should agree that the corporate media do not deserve.

Simon and Ruggiero are on the money. Though Hazen has a point when he says the independent press could be more savvy in its use of public relations techniques, to see inclusion in the mainstream media as a standard of excellence is to accept the corporate terms of engagement.

Two award-granting institutions regularly recognize our work here at *In These Times*. One is the *Utne Reader*, which in its current issue ranks *In These Times* No. 2 in the "Utne Reader 100," a list of the publications the magazine has cited most often in its 16-year history. The other is Project Censored. Every year, when *In These Times* articles are honored in Project Censored's list of the top 25 underreported stories, that tells us we have been doing something right. ■

The Willing Executioner

By Craig Aaron

Despite strong evidence of his innocence and an international outcry for Texas Gov. George W. Bush to spare his life, Gary Graham was executed on June 22. So much for compassionate conservatism.

Bush, who has overseen more executions than any other governor in the country, recently has come under increased scrutiny for his state's appalling administration of the death penalty. But even in light of this dubious record, Graham's case stands out.

There was no physical evidence tying him to the 1981 murder of Bobby Lambert: no blood, no hair, no fingerprints, not a speck of DNA. The murder weapon didn't match a gun owned by Graham. Though his motive was supposedly robbery, \$6,000 was found in Lambert's back pocket. Only 17 at the time of the murder, Graham was convicted solely on the testimony of one eyewitness who says she saw him for a split second through the windshield of her car from more than 30 feet away. She's sure he was the killer, but at least two other eyewitnesses insist that Graham wasn't the man they saw. Their testimony was never heard in court.

Why not? Like the majority of inmates who end up on Death Row, Graham couldn't afford a good lawyer. Instead, the court appointed the worst: Ronald G. Mock, who has more clients on Death Row than any other attorney in the country. (Of his 16 clients sentenced to death, Graham was the sixth to be executed.) Mock's incompetence and errors at trial erected insurmountable obstacles for Graham's appellate attorneys. Evidence that almost certainly would have led to an acquittal was ruled inadmissible.

Graham's tragic case highlights some of the most glaring flaws in our criminal justice system, but that doesn't change the fact that Bush has blood on his hands. He should not be allowed to hide behind dishonest claims that Graham received due process or that the decision on his fate belonged solely to the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles (all of whose members are Bush appointees).

Fifteen more Texas inmates are scheduled to die by Election Day. Graham's death should haunt the governor at every stop on the presidential campaign trail—but Al Gore has refused to challenge Bush on this issue.

Every politician knows the system is broken; they just care less about fairness than poll numbers. Yet issues of innocence, equality and fairness clearly resonate with the public. So the time is ripe to push for sensible, achievable reform measures. The Innocence Protection Act, currently stalled in Congress, would make post-conviction DNA testing available in federal cases and withhold funds from states that didn't adopt the same rules. Beyond that, the most obvious need is for minimum standards of competence and training for defense counsel in capital cases, as well as adequate resources to pay these attorneys and their investigators. Other sensible reforms include videotaping interrogations and confessions to avoid false or coerced testimony, and criminally penalizing prosecutors or law enforcement officials for intentionally destroying evidence.

Of course, the only way to truly ensure no innocent person is executed is to abolish capital punishment. But even the 87 innocent men released from Death Row since 1976 haven't been enough to bring about a national moratorium. The reality is that it might take killing an obviously innocent man to end capital punishment.

That's what happened in Rhode Island, where the last execution occurred in 1845. John Gordon, almost certainly innocent of the murder of a Yankee mill owner, was railroaded in a time of widespread anti-Irish sentiment, a victim of ethnic prejudice and a flawed legal system—sound familiar? The state repealed

Gary Graham's execution should haunt George W. Bush at every stop on the campaign trail.

capital punishment in 1852 after outcry over the circumstantial evidence that condemned him. "I forgive all my enemies, and persecutors," Gordon said at the gallows before his hanging, "I forgive them for they know not what they do."

But we know. What will be said 150 years from now about the shameful execution of Gary Graham? Will his death be remembered as the watershed moment that led to the end of capital punishment? Or will we still not have learned from our mistakes? ■

Terry LaBan



No Way Out

Palestinian refugees face an uncertain future

By Robin Shulman

FATME GATE, LEBANON—Walking alongside the chain-link fence and crumple of barbed wire that mark the border with Israel, Salim Yassin gazes into his homeland for the first time—and for the first time, doubts he will ever live there. “I feel that this is Israel—this is not Palestine,” he says haltingly, acknowledging that the land his parents knew may well be lost to him.

Yassin's family fled Nazareth during the war of 1948, and he was born in 1966 in the refugee camp of Miye Miye in southern Lebanon, where he was raised with the hope of one day returning to his parents' home. “You hear the slogans—‘The liberation has not stopped in Lebanon’—but now they're drawing the final borders,” Yassin says, taking in the manicured flower bushes lining the Israeli side of the fence. “Before, I could only imagine Israel. Now I see it.”

In May, Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon after 22 years of occupation. Since then, Palestinian refugees have gathered every day to talk to long-lost relatives and glimpse their homeland on the other side of the border. Nazmiyye Shabayta, a Palestinian woman in her seventies, came to the border with a rented bus and two cars full of more than 50 relatives to meet a branch of her family she hadn't seen since the '70s. “It was a joy,” she says. “We knew each other when we were children. We hope to all go back together.”

Along with the hopeful meetings through the fence, access to the Israeli border provides many Palestinians in Lebanon with a view of a radically changed homeland still far from reach. The Israeli pullout also reveals the contrast between what they view as

Hezbollah's recent military victory over Israel and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's stalling negotiations, which have shunted them to the sidelines and produced no tangible returns.

More than 350,000 Palestinian refugees live in Lebanon, where they fled after being forced out of their homes in Israel during the 1948 and 1967 wars. Largely confined to refugee camps, they have been granted few political or social rights. For them, the Israeli withdrawal, along with the death of Syrian president Hafez al-Assad a few weeks later, are more signals that a regional settlement may not include them.

Israel first entered Lebanon in 1978 and invaded Beirut in 1982 to stamp out

Although some groups within the Palestine Liberation Organization still talk about armed struggle, Arafat's faction, Fatah, supports his negotiation efforts. “If there is an agreement among Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Jordan to oppose the Israeli occupation on all frontiers,” says Fouad Rahman, a leader in the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, “we will take part in that military struggle immediately. But now the weight of the Palestinian struggle is in the Palestinian territories.”

Just past a Lebanese Army checkpoint at the entrance of Ein el Hilwe, another refugee camp in southern Lebanon, guards from Fatah staff their own checkpoint, armed with Kalashnikovs

adorned with stickers of Arafat's face. They have jockeyed for control of the entrances to the camp since last year, when Arafat—who thought he was on the verge of final negotiations on behalf of the Palestinian refugees—suddenly infused the camp with money and security men. The Lebanese authorities do not enforce law and order in the camps, and internal “security” often breaks down into violent rivalries.

While the PLO once provided residents with a full range of services, from hospitals to schools, this cash flow has been almost entirely rerouted to building a new state in the West Bank and Gaza (except for funding at politically sensitive times). The United Nations also has cut services since the Oslo Accords.

Only 2 percent of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are awarded permits to work outside the camps. In Ein el Hilwe, men sit idly fingering prayer beads and cigarettes. Children play soccer in narrow alleys of windowless, bullet-scarred tin and cement buildings. People mention U.N. resolutions regarding their fate by number in casual conversation. “The international community is asking for peace,” says Fathi Abu el Ardat, a Fatah leader of the southern Lebanon camps. “But they never ask how to end the causes of



Nazmiyye Shabayta (left) met with family she hadn't seen in 20 years.

the Palestinian state-within-a-state. By 1985, Israel had pulled back to occupy a strip of Lebanese land to prevent cross-border attacks—only to instigate years of battles with Lebanese guerrilla groups, principally Hezbollah, as well as the Palestinians.

But in 1991, the Palestinian guerrillas, who had been deployed all over southern Lebanon, were disarmed and confined to the camps by the Lebanese Army, as part of an agreement to end the civil war. Now there is little support for resuming the fight along the border. “Lebanon and the Syrian Army will try to keep the Palestinians in the camps, keep them from making trouble,” says one Lebanese analyst. “There isn't enough of a military capacity to project Palestinian power out of the camps.”

ROBIN SHULMAN

these conflicts. The refugee problem must be solved in order to have peace."

Back at the border, Yassin, who is wearing a crisp, blue button-down shirt and carrying a cell phone, says that he just lost his job as education coordinator at a French NGO, where he was permitted to work because it was an international organization. He does not know how he will find new employment. For now, his wife, a Lebanese citizen, is supporting Yassin and their two children. But it is difficult for his wife to face the fact that her children have inherited their father's statelessness. "My wife cried when she saw their ID cards," he says.

Yassin predicts little relief for the Palestinians refugees, even if Arafat reaches an agreement with Israel. With little hope of returning to Nazareth, Yassin will stay in Lebanon. "I feel that this is as close as I can get to my home," he says. ■

Harm's Way

Child sex tourism feeds Thailand's economy

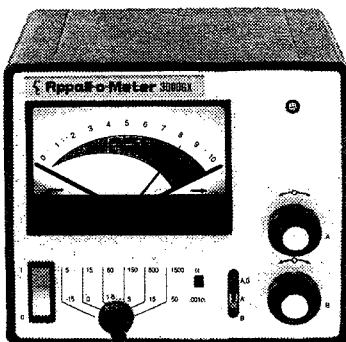
By Joshua Kurlantzick

PATTAYA, THAILAND—In a bar in this seaside town, two middle-aged men, an American and a Thai, bargain boisterously. Intense bargaining is common in Thailand, so other patrons pay the men no mind. After several minutes of arguing, the two agree on a price. The foreigner smiles, and the Thai races upstairs to bring down the object of the haggling: a boy no older than 10, who, for the equivalent of \$13, will be the American's sex slave for the evening. Above the bar, a neon sign reads "End Child Sex Tourism Now."

Though the Thai government recently claimed they saw nothing

illicit during a visit to Pattaya, finding pedophiles in this notorious beach resort is easy. On an average evening in Pattaya, a town filled with brothels, adult men wander through video arcades, hunting for children. According to police sources, many of the men buy boys and girls stuffed animals and then take them to nearby hotels for sex. At one strip of bars, teen-age Thais pimp boys younger than eight to foreign men. Some foreigners cruise certain intersections in search of "garland children," street kids who survive by selling flower garlands to drivers. "The garland kids are the easiest target for pedophiles, since they're so desperate they'd do anything to survive," says Sudarat Sereewat of the Coalition to Fight Against Child Exploitation (FACE).

Thai police sources say the number of foreigners traveling to Thailand for sex with minors is rising. Today, as many as 250,000 Thai children may be involved



Appall-o-Meter

By David Futrelle

Dog Daze 8.8

In a case of life imitates *South Park*, only not in a funny way, a Florida man was recently convicted of animal cruelty—after he beat a dog to death because he thought it was gay. George Stephens Finley of Ocala, Florida apparently was furious that his wife's dog, a neutered male poodle-Yorkshire terrier mix, was trying to mate with another family pet—a Jack Russell terrier who also happened to be male. So he hit the dog with a vacuum cleaner hose and threw it against a tree, injuring the animal so severely it had to be euthanized. "He felt that the dog was a queer-type dog and it made him angry," an official in the local sheriff's office told The Associated Press.

It's a Man's World 7.9

He was more than willing to undergo the drastic surgery that transformed him from a man into a woman. What he wasn't prepared for were the intolerable restric-

tions that face a woman in Iranian society. So now she wants to be a he again. "I can't go on living with the new identity, after years of living as a man with no restrictions," Maryam (the former Mehran) told the daily *Iran* newspaper. "First I thought I would get used to it, but life has become painful and intolerable. So I want a new sex change."

Iranian women face, among other restrictions, a mandatory dress code that requires them to cover their hair and body; they lack many crucial rights under a legal system that subordinates them to men; and, as the Reuters news account of this case points out, "official statistics show suicide rates among women far outstrip those of men."

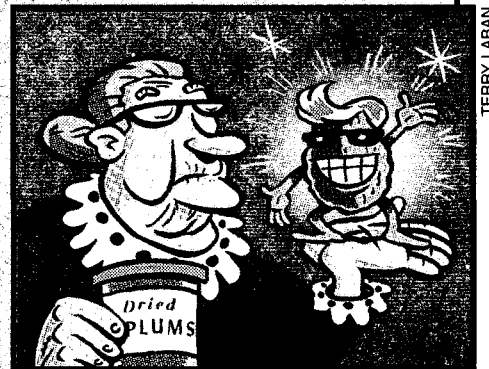
The Name Game 5.2

The Food and Drug Administration has granted the California Prune Board permission to use the term "dried plums" to describe the fruity foodstuffs with laxative qualities. According to research conducted by the folks at the CPB—soon to be the CDPB?—"the name 'dried plum' offers a

more positive connotation than 'prune' and [will] encourage more people to try the fruit" the organization explains in a recent press release.

"People have told us ... they're more likely to eat dried plums than prunes," CPB Executive Director Richard L. Peterson says, even though dried plums and prunes are the exact same thing.

The organization even has attracted political support for the semantic change. "If you call a dried plum a dried plum



instead of calling it a prune, it sells better," California Sen. Barbara Boxer is quoted in a CPB press release. "I think we're talking about jobs, we're talking about all kinds of good things that can happen once we can sell this product as a dried plum."

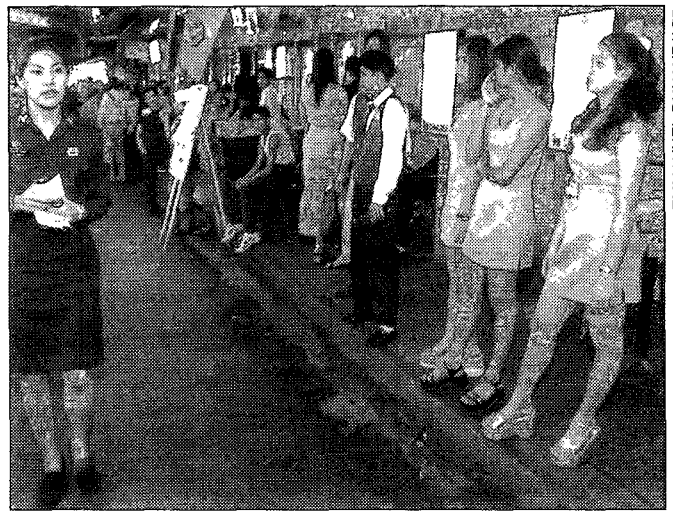
TERRY LABAN

in the flesh trade. Several recent cases highlight this inflow of sexual predators, the majority of whom reportedly come from America, Germany, Sweden and Japan. In early March, Thai police arrested an American musician who worked at a prestigious Bangkok hotel and charged him with molesting several Thai girls. Several days after the American's arrest, police nabbed a Swedish tourist in Hua Hin, a southern Thai resort, for allegedly paying an underage flower-seller to fondle him. Out on bail, both the American and the Swede have vanished.

Most child welfare workers in Thailand credit the combination of the Asian economic crisis, which began in Bangkok in 1997, and the Internet for the increase in the number of children forced into sexual slavery. Though Thailand's economy is growing again, this recovery has not reached slum areas, says Father Joe Maier of the Human Development Foundation, a group working with poor children. "More kids are entering the illegal economy, which means more available children for pedophiles," he

says. "The economic meltdown is still destroying whatever's left of low-income Thai families, and many simply can't make a legal living anymore. They have to use their children in the illegal economy to survive."

The Internet has only made it easier for sex tourists to prey on children. Anyone with a computer can access American Web sites displaying child pornography or enter chat rooms in which pedophiles trade information about the best places in Southeast Asia to purchase children. "Most pedophiles coming here act individually," says Wanchai Roujanavong of FACE, "but there are a lot of networks between them. Most of these links are in America."



EMMANUEL DUNAND/AFP

A Thai tourist police officer patrols Bangkok's red-light district.

Yet Thailand also must shoulder some of the blame for child sex tourism. Thailand's tourism ministry has been criticized for abetting pedophilia by depicting Thais as immature, docile objects to be used by foreign men. "The marketing of certain destinations, particularly within Asia, says a statement put out by the Bangkok-based group End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT), "portrays an image of women and children who are passive."

In the past five years, Thai police have arrested more than 25 foreigners in Pattaya for sexually abusing children. But in most cases, the alleged abusers successfully fled the country or allegedly paid off police and children to drop the case. In July 1999, police raided the Pattaya hotel room occupied by Philip Howarth, a British teacher, and found him in bed with a 14-year-old Thai boy. In December, Howarth was acquitted of molestation charges. A free man, he told reporters he had paid police \$395 for his acquittal and boasted on the Internet of his exploits with children. Similarly, in November 1999, a Japanese man who was caught naked with a 12-year-old boy returned home free and subsequently informed the *Manichi Shimbun* newspaper that he had paid Thai police \$15,800 to escape. Thai police deny taking any bribes.



JOE RAEDLE/NEWSMAKERS

Who's the Animal? Prisoners are chained together in Phoenix's Maricopa County Jail, where Sheriff Joe Arpaio boasts of instituting one of the most severe penal systems in the country. Maricopa houses inmates serving less than a year for petty crimes.

Arpaio began the first female chain gang in the United States. Women choose between 23 hours a day in lockdown or the chain gang, where they bury bodies in Phoenix's pauper cemetery.

In June, Arpaio began housing dogs in the county's few air-conditioned cells. Inmates, meanwhile, must suffer through Phoenix's blistering summer—hundreds have to live in guarded tent camps. "It's too hot for the dogs over in those tents with the inmates," Arpaio told the *Arizona Republic*.

Arpaio spends 66 cents a day on an inmate's meals and twice that for a dog. "I just want to feed them better," he said.

Kristin Koib-Angelbeck

Although more than 20 countries have laws allowing nationals who abuse children abroad to be tried at home, such trials are rare. As a result of a 1994 crime bill, it is illegal in the United States for anyone to travel abroad with the intent of having sex with children. But showing that an American went overseas with the specific intention of procuring sex from minors is extremely difficult. No one has ever been prosecuted under this law. And according to ECPAT, some states actually hinder Thailand's attempts to send foreigners home to be tried, in order to avoid embarrassing revelations about how their citizens behave overseas.

The international community has made limited efforts to assist Thai law enforcement officials. The FBI plans to increase coordination with Thailand in combating child sex tourism, and British police have inaugurated a program in which they train Thai peers to handle sex-abuse cases. Child welfare advocates hope increased cooperation among law enforcement agencies, as well as a new statute due in September that will force Thai police to interview children more sensitively, will discourage pedophiles. In the past, brusque interrogators scared children, making them less willing to confront their abusers.

But few people are optimistic that child sex tourism can be halted in Thailand. The amount of money allotted to train police to interview abused children is miniscule, and even the closest cooperation among police forces may not stop pedophiles' cyberspace links. Though several Web sites promoting child sex tourism have been shut down, law enforcement officials admit that sex abusers' private chat rooms are virtually impossible to police. "To succeed, we ultimately have to convince normal travelers to identify sex tourists and point them out to the police, potentially ruining their own holiday," says Muireann O' Briain of ECPAT. "That is a very difficult attitude to cultivate." ■

Paper Chase

The AFL-CIO sparks a new immigrant rights movement

By David Bacon

LOS ANGELES—Just a year ago, discussion of amnesty for undocumented immigrants was considered laughable among Beltway lobbyists. But times have changed.

Last October, the AFL-CIO announced at its Los Angeles convention that it was revising its position on immigration. In February the federation passed an historic resolution calling for amnesty for illegal immigrant workers. Since then, a handful of bills to legalize undocumented workers have been introduced across the country. "The change by the labor movement has made a whole new discussion possible," says Victor Narro, a staff attorney at the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights

hearing, held in Los Angeles in mid-June, the immense support for amnesty was impossible to ignore. More than 16,000 people—mostly immigrants from Central and South America—packed into the L.A. Sports Arena, with 4,000 more gathered outside.

In addition to the unions, the Los Angeles hearing was sponsored by 60 churches and community organizations, from the National Mexican Brotherhood to the Catholic Archdiocese. "Labor can open some doors," says Miguel Contreras, secretary of the Los Angeles County Labor Federation, "but we need a grassroots base, and this huge turnout shows not only that it can be done, but that politicians who want the Latino vote had better take note."

Inside the arena, a procession of workers recounted horrifying experiences to a panel of union leaders. Maria Sanchez described the way managers at the Palm Canyon Hotel in Palm Springs fired a number of workers after they joined the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union. When forced to rehire them, the hotel suddenly decided to check their immigration status and refused to put them back to work. The workers, both documented and undocumented, responded by staying off the job until everyone was rehired. "I lost my house and my car," Sanchez said. "I sold some of my possessions so I could survive."

Ofelia Parra, a worker in Washington State's apple-packing sheds, described the mass termination of 700 undocumented workers in the midst of a Teamsters organizing drive. The workers were fired at the demand of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Teamsters' drive ended. "We contribute to this society just like the people who have papers," Parra said. "We need an amnesty so we can work in peace and organize to improve conditions."

The last amnesty was contained in the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act. It allowed about 3 million people, who entered the United States before 1982, to gain legal status. Since then, all undocumented immigrants have remained illegal.



In Los Angeles, 20,000 people turned out to support the AFL-CIO's call for unconditional amnesty and workers rights.

in Los Angeles. "Now we have a labor movement that's on the side of immigrants, rather than one bent on trying to stop immigration."

At the October convention, the AFL-CIO proposed hearings to gather testimony about how immigration law has undermined workers rights, and to forge a new coalition between labor and religious and community organizations to push for unconditional amnesty. The hearings started in March and moved across the country to New York, Atlanta, Chicago and other big cities. At the final

DAVID BACON

Texas, there's little legal recourse to stop the flow of sludge.

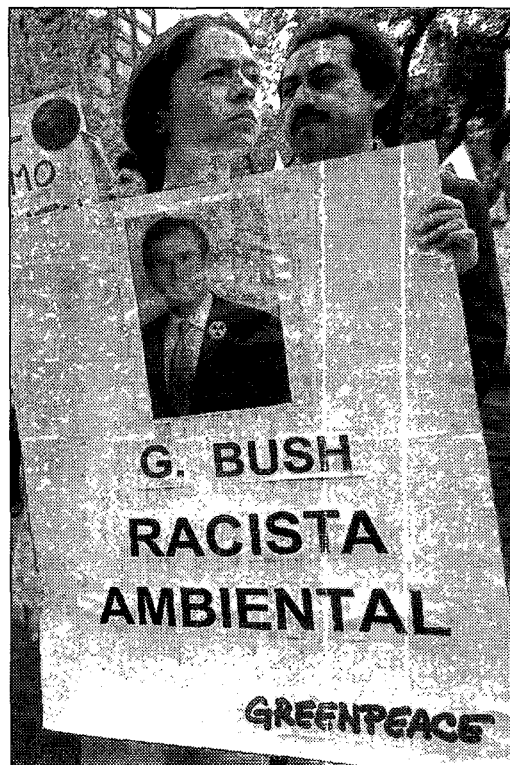
How New York City's sludge—toxic, foul-smelling and loaded with live pathogens—got to Sierra Blanca tells us a lot about the way poor, minority communities in America become dumping grounds for the powerful. And it also speaks volumes about the shameless political panderings of Bush.

For decades, New York dumped its sewage off the New Jersey coast. Then in 1988, Congress banned ocean dumping of sludge and a mad rush ensued for a new disposal site. Because the sludge failed to meet New York environmental standards, the city looked to the nearest possible state that would allow it, Oklahoma. But reports that the sludge was contaminated with a toxic menu of pollutants, ranging from arsenic and chromium to mercury and lead, prompted the Oklahoma state legislature to pass a law banning the import of out-of-state sewage. Next New York eyed Arizona. But this normally compliant state also rose up, banning sewage shipped by rail. Finally in 1992, they honed in on a site in Hudspeth County, only three miles away from Sierra Blanca.

The company that won the lucrative contract to haul away and dispose of New York's sludge was Merco Joint Venture, a Long Island firm with a nasty reputation. In return for its \$168 million deal, Merco pledged that they would use the "nutrient rich" sludge on arid ranch lands in the Southwest in order to "reclaim" them.

Merco didn't take any chances that their permit might be denied. They put 40 local people on their payroll, including the former sheriff and his wife, former state environmental regulators and politicians. They unfurled a \$598,000 public relations campaign and also made a \$1.5 million bequest to Texas Tech University. The funds were earmarked for a study of the beneficial uses of sludge, although officials at the university had endorsed the dump even before the money was in their pockets. The permit was approved almost immediately, without an environmental review or any public hearings.

The permit allowed Merco to dump more than 200 tons of wet sewage sludge every day. There were problems almost immediately. The air began to stink, causing residents who lived more than 20 miles from the dump to gag from the odor. Property values dropped and some ranches close to the dump simply couldn't be sold. Then people began developing skin rashes, blisters and strange cases of influenza. Complaints to the state environmental agencies went unheeded. "The chemical vapors mixed with a fecal



Sierra Blanca has provoked protest in Mexico City.

smell are indescribable, except to say it smells like death," says Bill Addington, a Sierra Blanca resident and environmental organizer. "The Texas Air Control Board came down and told us it was just the smell of cow patties."

Addington and others filed a civil action with the EPA in 1997, alleging that the dump amounted to an act of environmental racism. The EPA summarily dismissed the action. Later that year, Merco applied to the Bush-appointed Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission for a five-year extension of its permit. They also requested that the permit be expanded, allowing them to triple the amount of

sludge the company could dump on each acre. According to a report on the dump by the Texas chapter of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), Merco hired Cliff Johnson—Bush's former legislative director—to navigate the permit through the commission.

The commission dismissed complaints by local residents and swiftly approved the new permit. Soon Merco began dumping 400 tons of wet sludge a day. When New York City's Environmental Protection Commission dispatched a fact-checking team to Sierra Blanca, they were met with hostility. "I don't think it's fair for you people to come here and shove this thing down our children's throats and say that its good because it's not," said Margie Mendez, a teacher at the local grade school. "You're not here to see the kids come in with warts, or having stomach viruses, or blisters in their mouths."

Naturally, Merco's management of the dump didn't improve. In 1999, the company admitted that it had violated federal and state regulations by not properly treating the New York City sewage sludge for bacteria and pathogens. So far Merco has escaped any punishment for this violation. This was the second time Merco had been caught. In 1994, it was fined a paltry \$12,800 by the state of Texas for dumping untreated sludge, which can carry *E. coli*, salmonella and tuberculosis. In 1996, there was an outbreak of a New York flu virus in Van Horn, Texas, 30 miles west of the dumpsite. "We feel like guinea pigs," Addington says.

Bush has remained strangely mute about the situation in Sierra Blanca. But the governor's office told *In These Times* that complaints from Sierra Blanca's residents were understandable but unwarranted, saying that newly sprayed sludge has a "harmless earthy odor."

Meanwhile, the town of Sierra Blanca is so destitute that it can't even afford to build its own sewer system. Bush bills himself as a kind of new Republican, a "compassionate conservative" who is in tune with the needs of Hispanic Americans and has a soft spot for the environment. But if the experience of Sierra Blanca is any guide, these pledges don't have even an aroma of truth to them. ■

Statesman Abroad

By Linda Lutton

It's hard to believe he didn't think of it earlier. For years, Raúl Ross Piñeda has pored over the Mexican Constitution, read Mexican electoral law backward and forward, and even contributed to its reform. Over the past decade, the fight for Mexicans living abroad to be able to vote in their country's elections has absorbed his life.

Ross won't be able to vote in Mexico's July 2 national elections this year, either—unless he can make it to the border on election day, that is. But there's a big new twist this time: Ross is a candidate in the July 2 national elections, campaigning from Pilsen, the Chicago neighborhood where he lives with his wife and two children.

"I guess this just never occurred to anyone before," says Ross, the first-ever Mexican living abroad to be nominated as a candidate for the Mexican Congress. Last year, Ross reread Mexican law books. "I found that while we might not be able to vote from abroad, we can run as candidates," he says.

Ross, well known in Mexico for his writings on political rights for Mexicans living abroad, makes for somewhat of an awkward candidate. He seems much more comfortable in the role of intellectual than of politician. At a recent Chicago fundraiser, essentially a panel discussion by university professors from Mexico, Ross chain smoked until it was his turn to talk, shuffled papers from his written speech, and nervously tried, with limited success, to joke with the small crowd.

Ross developed a political consciousness by the time he was 15, after watching local PRI officials use his youth soccer team to fill out the crowds at their political rallies. He finished high school, but never went to college. He mostly worked on construction jobs and did a stint in the petroleum industry, where he got involved in union organizing. He was also active in left-wing electoral politics and in a large squatters' movement in Mexico City.

At 29, he slipped into the United States on New Year's Eve 1985, when, as

he says, "at least half the *migra* would be on holiday," crossing the border with a "friend who had the same problem as I did—no money for a coyote and no papers." Today, he works for the Quakers



Raúl Ross Piñeda in front of a Cesar Chavez mural in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood.

as the Mexican affairs director of the American Friends Service Committee.

In March, delegates to the convention of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) voted unanimously to nominate Ross as a candidate for the deputies chamber of Congress in a "superdistrict" of seven southern states that includes his home state of Veracruz.

His chances of being elected are excellent, with anti-PRI sentiment in Mexico running strong. He is number 11 on a slate of 40 candidates proposed for his district by the Alianza Por Mexico—a coalition of five political parties, including the PRD. Under a system of proportional representation, the Alianza will send its candidates to Congress in proportion to the amount of the vote the party receives in the district.

"For the first time in history, Mexicans abroad are going to have a voice and a vote," Ross says. "Mexicans

living abroad make up 15 percent of the total citizenry of our country. That's a very large group to be excluded."

Ross might have been the first candidate living in the United States to run for Congress in Mexico, but he wasn't the only one for long. The PRD also nominated a Los Angeles activist to its slate of candidates in a different superdistrict. And the PRI, which has long opposed opening up political

opportunities for Mexicans living abroad, rushed to name a Los Angeles resident to one of its slates.

Ross says that winning the vote for Mexicans living abroad will be his number-one priority in Congress. But he and other activists on the issue have already upped the ante, calling for a separate congressional district for Mexicans living outside Mexico. He estimates that between 7 million and 12 million Mexicans living abroad would be eligible to vote.

This time around, Mexico's ruling party is not likely to come away from the elections with a majority in either chamber of Congress. And since it was a PRI-majority senate that blocked Mexicans living abroad from exercising their right to vote, Ross thinks the struggle for the vote is entering the home stretch. "I think we're on the final leg of this race," he says. ■

right to tax money someone earned through hard work, thrift, smart investing and good luck—though that last crucial element is rarely mentioned.

Although Congress is unlikely to override a promised Clinton veto, the administration says it is willing to reduce the bite of the inheritance tax, just three years after the law was changed to raise exemptions and make special concessions to farmers and small business owners—who were the poster boys for the assault on the inheritance tax once again this year. Yet in 1998, out of 47,500 estate tax returns, only 780 involved small businesses and 640 involved farms. Moreover, according to Chuck Hassebrook of the Center for Rural Affairs, a family farm advocacy group in Nebraska, “repeal of the estate tax would be a profound blow to the future of family farming and would simply pave the way for greater concentration of wealth in farming and every pursuit,” rewarding precisely the big operators who are driving smaller family farms out of business.

Small business groups, including those representing minorities, joined in the lobbying, but the voting pattern reveals a more significant constituency. The chief sponsor of the repeal was Jennifer Dunn, a Republican from the eastside suburbs of Seattle, home to many newly minted high-tech multimillionaires. And nearly half of California’s Democratic delegation voted for repeal; their constituents include the dot-com wonders and tech industry employees betting on a fortune from stock options.

There are plenty of good reasons to tax large estates. First, despite lots of tax dodging, it’s inherently a progressive tax—paid for by people who can afford it and who have benefited most from the overall bounty of American society. Also, it brings in significant revenue—about \$28 billion, enough to pay for the Earned Income Tax Credit that helps lift millions of low-income families out of poverty. In the first decade of a phase-out, the government would lose about \$105 billion, but in the following decade, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, repeal would cost \$620 billion in lost taxes. While opponents rail about multiple taxation, the estate tax partly captures capital-gains taxes that heirs do not pay on assets held a long time in the estate. In a very modest way, it’s also an effort to democratize the economy, or as Congress said in 1916 when the tax was first passed, “to break up the swollen fortunes of the rich.”

Though that’s still a worthy goal, those swollen fortunes are the mother’s milk of today’s politics. If politicians were paying attention to the real fortunes of most Americans, they would

be thinking about adding a wealth tax. Instead, politics and the mass media are filled with dangerously misleading images of the average Americans enthusiastically cashing in on the stock-market boom with 401(k) plans, stock options and skyrocketing values of new, unproven companies.

While it’s true that a growing number of Americans have some stake in the stock market, the big picture shows growing inequality of wealth, with greater insecurity lurking in the shadows. For example, in an analysis of the most recent Federal Reserve Board statistics by New York University Professor Edward N. Wolff, the net worth of the top 1 percent of households grew by 42.2 percent from 1983 to 1998. But the net worth of the bottom 40 percent actually plummeted by 76.3 percent over that time. They went bust during the boom.

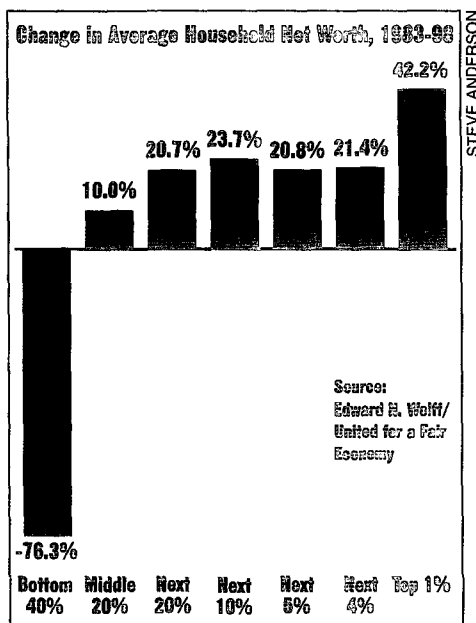
Those numbers are not the consequence of the poor being inherently lousy stock pickers. The top 1 percent—households with at least \$3.3 million in net worth—owned 42.1 percent of all stocks, mutual funds and retirement accounts in 1998, with 36.6 percent held by the next richest 9 percent of households. That left 21.3 percent in the hands of the remaining 90 percent of the population. Although 43 percent of American households had some direct or indirect stock holdings in 1997, about a third of them owned less than \$2,000 worth.

The problem is not simply that the richest 20 percent of households captured around 90 percent of the growth in both wealth and income from 1983 to 1998. Over that time, the debt load of American families, especially in the low- to middle-income range, has grown sharply, and the ranks of families with zero or negative net worth—more debts than assets—grew from 15.5 percent to 18 percent from 1983 to 1998. Despite this disparity, there’s a collective obsession with the stock market as a solution to all problems.

What are the consequences of all this? Greatly disproportionate wealth leads to greatly disproportionate political influence. It also creates hugely unequal opportunities for the next generation.

Wealth inequality also means that lower-income people, who are more vulnerable to vicissitudes of employment, have less cushion against misfortune, especially since growing numbers of Americans also have no health insurance. Not only are they bad for people’s health, but, as even many conservatives acknowledge, huge disparities in wealth and income create social tensions. Many economists also argue that great inequity is bad for long-term economic growth, and current growth could rapidly collapse, since it is based in large part on consumer spending by families enriched by the stock-market bubble.

The media are filled with dangerously misleading images of average Americans enthusiastically cashing in on the stock-market boom.



Accumulated wealth is also the basis for retirement incomes. In theory, people rely on Social Security, private pensions and personal savings for retirement, but fewer people—now less than half—have private pensions and those are increasingly riskier plans without guaranteed benefits. Significant personal savings are obviously concentrated at the top, while most people rely primarily on Social Security. Yet bull-market mania has led to an assault on Social Security through plans for privatization.

George W. Bush's privatization plan—diverting part of Social Security payments into individual private accounts—would move Social Security away from its important but modest role in redistributing income and its even more important function as reliable social insurance. (Contrary to prevailing hysteria, its future is sound, at most requiring small tax increases in the distant future.) Though its projected gains are highly unrealistic, the Bush plan would fatten brokers' pockets with administrative costs. With part of the revenue diverted, it would also require more taxes or benefit cuts for current retirees.

Al Gore also has succumbed to stock-market fever. Following an earlier Clinton model, the vice president has now proposed a supplement to Social Security: The government would match savings in a tax-sheltered account for low- to moderate-income families, providing a more generous match of \$3 in tax credits for every dollar saved by families with lower incomes. While Gore's plan doesn't threaten Social Security and is progressive in theory (unlike Bush's plan), in practice it is more likely to most benefit middle-income families, who can save more easily and benefit from tax credits, rather than low-income families who pay little or no income tax. It would also cost the government \$200 billion over 10 years.

More than a new savings vehicle, American families need higher incomes. Despite some upticks at the bottom, thanks to a minimum-wage increase and a tight labor market, there has been little growth in wages and income for

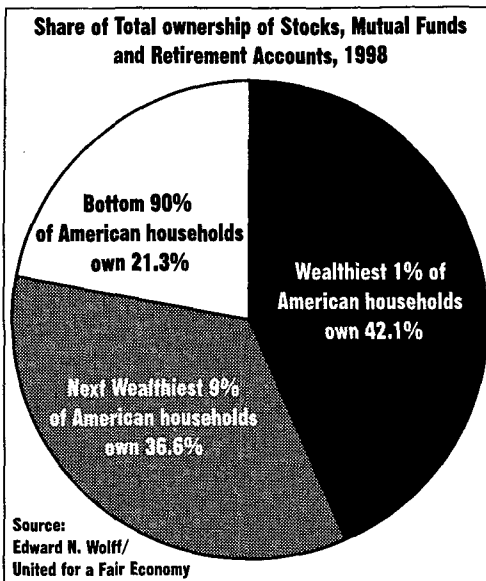
STEVE ANDERSON

most Americans in this boom. According to United for a Fair Economy, a research and advocacy group that focuses public awareness on wealth inequality, the median worker in 1998 would have made \$12,500 more a year if her wages had kept pace with productivity increases since 1973. If wages had grown, then the average worker would have had something to save.

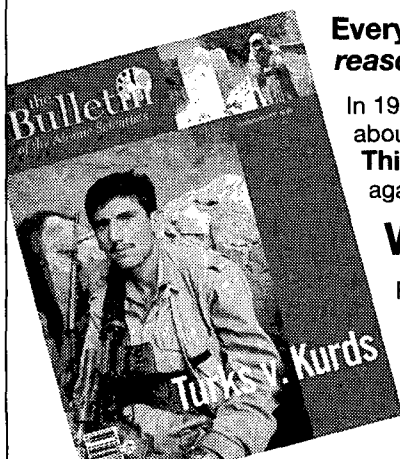
To further combat inequality, what workers really need are more minimum-wage increases, universal single-payer health insurance, protection of their right to organize unions, a full-employment Federal Reserve policy, generous education and income support for displaced workers, and investment of that \$200 billion in research, education and public infra-

structure that could generate real wealth and higher incomes.

If Gore wanted to tackle the unfairness of the distribution of wealth in an eminently capitalist fashion, he could propose a modest tax on the wealth of the richest households and use the revenue to give every young person a nest egg—say \$80,000—that could pay for college or help start a business. Last year, Yale law professors Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott outlined such a plan in *The Stakeholder Society*. It wouldn't eliminate the privileges of wealth or the injustices of a market system—nor remove the need for programs like Social Security and universal health care—but it would be a small step toward greater equality of wealth and opportunity. It would also be a public investment in the American people—the real wealth of the nation. ■



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Food Pyramid Scheme

By Salim Muwakkil

Milk is becoming the major bone of contention in a rancorous debate about racism in U.S. dietary guidelines. Designed by the Department of Agriculture, the guidelines form the basis for all public and most private nutrition programs, including school breakfast and lunch programs, the food stamp program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. Among other things, these federal guidelines recommend that all Americans over the age of two have two to three servings of dairy products each day, despite the fact that most non-white Americans are lactose intolerant.

Because of this common condition, dairy consumption is apt to provoke uncomfortable abdominal pain, bloating, gas and diarrhea among the affected population. Yet the USDA has ignored that many Americans get sick when they drink milk. According to a two-part article last year in the *Journal of the National Medical Association*, lactose intolerance affects approximately 90 percent of Asian-Americans, 70 percent of African-Americans, 70 percent of Native Americans and 53 percent of Hispanics. The condition—lacking the lactase enzyme, which enables digestion of the milk sugar lactose—is rare only among Americans of northern European descent.



"Although it may be unintentional," explains Dr. Milton Mills, co-author of the *Journal* article, "the U.S. dietary guidelines as they exist are really a fundamental form of institutionalized racism in a rather destructive and insidious format." Mills is a member of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM), a Washington-based group that promotes preventive nutrition and has been among the most vocal opponents of the USDA guidelines. In fact, the PCRM has filed a lawsuit charging that the agency's guidelines were unhealthy and catered to the food industry.

Mills, who is African-American, told *In These Times* that the USDA's cavalier attitude about lactose intolerance is just one aspect of the federal government's lack of concern for the health needs of minorities. He argues that the government's refusal to encourage consumption of nondairy sources of cal-

cium or to highlight the considerable evidence linking meat and dairy diets to many of the ailments that disproportionately affect American minorities is irresponsible at best.

Diseases that occur with a higher frequency among African-Americans, like diabetes, cardiovascular problems, prostate cancer and obesity, are aggravated by the fat and cholesterol found in the animal and dairy products recommended in the federal dietary guidelines. But there is little recognition of this link in the guidelines. The "Food Guide Pyramid," which was developed as a graphic representation of the guidelines, displays a pattern of food consumption and recommended servings that allegedly encourages the most healthy diet. At the very top of the pyramid are the foods that should be eaten sparingly: fats, oils and sweets. The next level includes meat and dairy products, and recommends two to three servings a day. The third level includes vegetables and fruits, and recommends two to five daily servings. The pyramid's foundation includes breads and grains, and recommends six to 11 servings.

The recommendation that all individuals over age two consume cow's milk daily began with the 1916 federal food guide and has remained constant despite increasing evidence that dairy consumption has major downsides. Prior to the '60s, most American

health professionals believed that the lack of the lactase enzyme was rare. But, according to an article in PCRM's magazine, that changed in 1965 when researchers from Johns Hopkins University found that while just 15 percent of whites had digestive problems from ingesting lactose, no fewer than 70 percent of African-Americans had problems. The following year, a study of Maryland prison inmates found that 90 percent of African-Americans and only 10 percent of European-Americans developed symptoms. Further studies concurred that lactose intolerance was widespread.

In 1988, the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* reported that "it rapidly became apparent that this pattern (lactose intolerance) was the genetic norm, and that lactase activity was sustained only in a majority of adults whose origins were in northern European or some Mediterranean populations." Health professionals now recommend a change in terminology; those unable to digest milk should be considered normal rather than "lactose intolerant," while adults who have retained the digesting enzymes should be called "lactase persistent."

Yet more than 30 years after health professionals first realized that the inability to digest milk sugar was a normal condition, the USDA persists in recommending two dairy servings each day. One reason for this nutritional obtuseness is found in the agency's origins.

When Congress created it in 1862, the USDA was charged with educating the public on agricultural matters, including food policy, while working with food producers to provide a reliable, consistent food supply. The agency published its first food guide in 1916, and it was designed largely to encourage diets based on foods produced by those with the most clout. In the early '50s, the USDA created four basic food groups: milk, meat, fruits and vegetables, and breads and cereals. Food industry representatives like cattlemen and dairy farmers were integral to this process.


During the '70s, studies revealed the health dangers of fatty foods, and a Senate committee suggested the basic four food groups be revised to reduce the intake of cholesterol and saturated fat and increase the consumption of fruits, grains and vegetables. But outrage from influential groups of food producers forced a revision of the report from a message of "eat less meat and milk" to "choose lean meat and nonfat milk." In 1991, the USDA attempted to release an "Eating Right Pyramid," which emphasized grains and vegetables rather than animal products.

But, according to the PCRM, "the Cattlemen's

Association joined forces with the National Milk Producers Federation and other trade associations in opposing publication of this new model. Within weeks the Eating Right Pyramid was withdrawn."

The continuing influence of food producers in designing the USDA's dietary guidelines has prompted a lawsuit from the PCRM against the USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), another federal agency involved in setting the dietary guidelines. The suit alleges racial bias and conflict of interest in the formulation of the guidelines and the food pyramid. American minorities are disproportionately affected by chronic diseases, the suit charges, and would be better served by dietary guidelines more inclusive of their needs.

The group claims that those concerns are missing because six of the 11 advisory committee members who devise the guidelines have explicit links to the meat or dairy industries. Specifically, the PCRM charges, the committee chairman and at least five other committee members have had links to the National Dairy Board, the National Dairy Council, the American Egg Board, the National Cattlemen's Beef



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though drinking milk makes
most non-white Americans sick.**

Association, the American Meat Institute, the Dannon Research Institute and other similar groups.

"Having them on the very panel that is supposed to decide what's healthy for Americans to eat is like having Joe Camel on a committee designed to help people quit smoking," said PCRM president Neal D. Barnard when he announced the suit. While all Americans are ill-served by these questionable guidelines, Barnard noted, the problems are magnified in groups that are hardest hit by chronic, diet-related diseases.

The suit's primary goals are to encourage the committee to make recommendations that recognize the role diet plays in contributing to the high rates of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke, hypertension, obesity and lactose intolerance among Americans in general and people of color in particular; to promote the healthiest possible diet to reduce this toll; to make dairy products optional in the dietary guidelines; and to ensure that, in the future, the USDA and the DHHS choose members of advisory committees without conflicting ties to any food industries.

A number of organizations and individuals are supporting the PCRM position, including the Congressional Black Caucus, the NAACP, the National Hispanic Medical Association, former Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. and Martin Luther King III. What's more, several supporters have joined in the lawsuit against the federal government. Massachusetts state Sen. Dianne

Wilkerson joined the suit because of concerns that federally subsidized nutrition programs pushing milk may cause children in her primarily African-American district who have difficulty digesting lactose to suffer through the day with bloating and abdominal cramps.

The federal government insists that the food industry exerted no inappropriate pressure to design the guidelines. The National Dairy Council and the International Dairy Foods Association take issue with claims that milk products are dangerous. "A broad body of scientific data continues to demonstrate that dairy products are excellent sources of nutrients that are critical to disease prevention and normal physical growth and health," reads a statement issued jointly by the two groups, rebutting the PCRM's charges. "This attack is blatantly untrue and particularly irresponsible given that dairy products are an economical, widely available source of excellent nutrition for all Americans."

But critics charge that much healthier alternative sources of calcium—collard greens, broccoli, kale and beans—are omitted from the Food Guide Pyramid. In fact, the PCRM and its growing number of supporters have the USDA running for cover on the issue of inappropriate influence of the food industry in guidelines designed for optimal nutrition. By combining the dietary struggle with issues of racial fairness, the PCRM may finally have hit on a combination that will force the federal government to take a principled stand on preventive nutrition. ■

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Taiwan Stands Up?

By
**Nickola
Pazderic**

On May 20, Chen Shui-bian and Annette Lu of the Democratic Progressive Party were sworn in as president and vice president of the Republic of China, or Taiwan. This extraordinary event deserves both enthusiastic acclaim and critical consideration. For while their peaceful inauguration signals a triumph of democracy, questions of nationalism still haunt Taiwan. To maintain his popular mandate and avoid war with mainland China, Chen must balance two competing visions of manifest destiny.

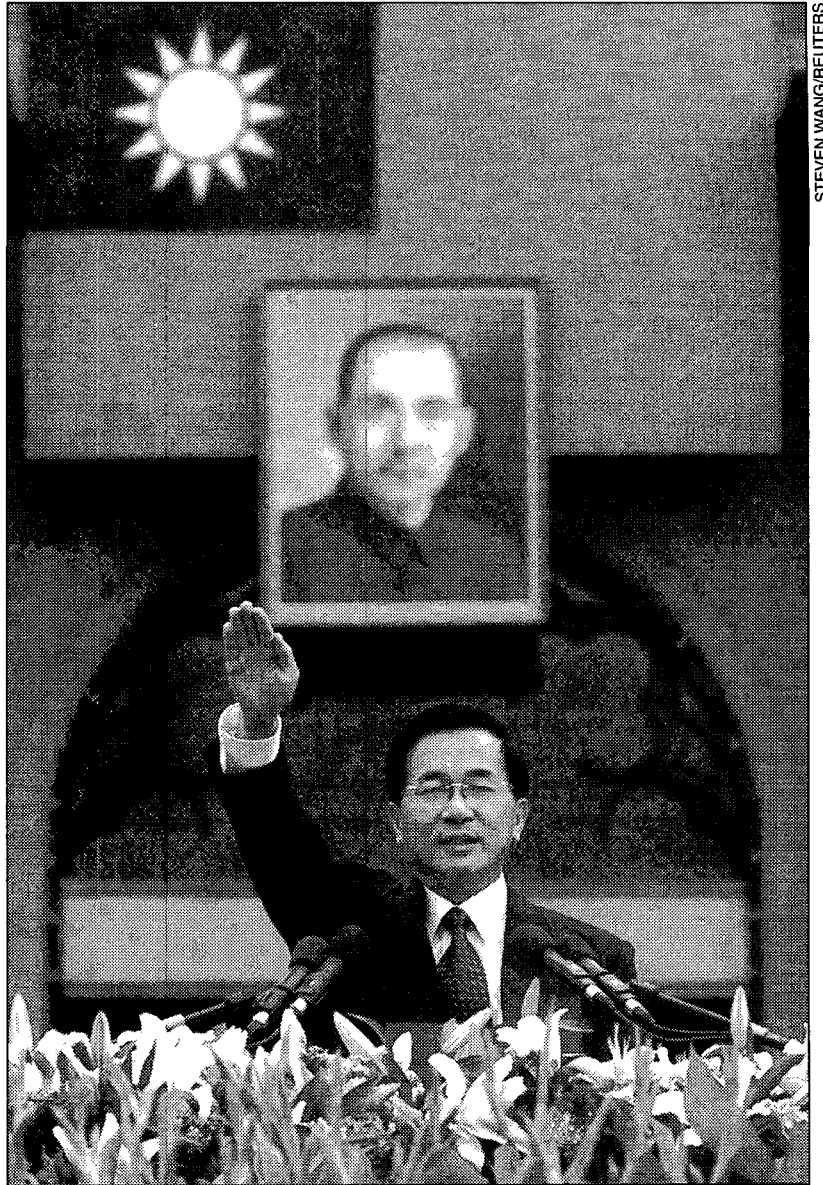
Nationalism infuses all political thought and events in Taiwan. This is because Taiwan, despite its clear borders, national language, shared history and other definitive features of the modern nation-state, is not recognized as such by the international community. Rather, any assertion of independence by Taiwan is precluded by the diplomatic maneuvering and military power of the People's Republic of China.

Taking "eventual reunification with the motherland" as a type of natural law, Beijing claims Taiwan to be an "unalienable part of China." With the collapse of Maoist ideologies in the late '70s, Beijing increasingly relies on a sense of shared national destiny to justify its claims of authority over a rickety amalgamation of regions and peoples called "China." Polls show that the overwhelming majority of mainland Chinese would be willing to go to war to enforce this destiny.

The election of Chen and Lu clearly attacks the legitimacy of this form of Chinese nationalism for the hegemonic fiction that it is. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) itself came into being in 1986 as a reaction to the authoritarian Nationalist Party (KMT), which ruled Taiwan with totalitarian control after the arrival of Chiang Kai-shek's army in 1945. The rule of the Nationalist Party following its

defeat on the mainland in 1949 made its own brand of Chinese nationalism part of everyday experience in schools, offices, the military and the media during its reign. The DPP has always criticized nationalist brainwashing of the public by the KMT and decried the general ignorance of the population about local history.

In light of the horrors of nationalism demonstrated during the 20th century (the Nationalist Party was very much influenced by the Nazis), it might be hoped that Chen and his party would eschew all appeals to a national culture; for even a nationalism centered on a shared local culture tends



President Chen Shui-bian at his inauguration.

STEVEN WANG/REUTERS

to misrepresent local experience. Yet Taiwanese nationalism remains central to the image Chen and others proffer to a yearning public. In his inaugural address, Chen proclaimed, "Taiwan stands up, representing the self-confidence of the people and the dignity of the country." Similarly, at a victory celebration after his election, Chen declared: "May the heavens bless the people and may the heavens bless Taiwan our motherland forever." Such proclamations may seem tame, but they are well understood and detested by leaders in mainland China.

Like nationalism around the world, the Taiwanese version has emerged through both resistance to and conformity with the practices and preconceptions of colonial powers. There is no record of Taiwanese national consciousness before the late 19th century and the beginning of Japanese colonial rule. The Taiwanese consciousness that emerged from that encounter, however, largely was limited to the educated classes.

When the Nationalists arrived in 1945, they found not a "Chinese province" prepared for liberation, as their wartime propaganda had taught, but approximately 4 million people who were, for the most part, accustomed to Japanese ways and a higher level of economic and technological development than the Nationalists could afford or provide. By 1947, tensions were high and a brutal crackdown against intellectuals and others left more than 10,000 people dead. Many of Taiwan's educated elite who believed that the Japanese experience had made the island unique were murdered. With this event, 40 years of "white terror" under martial law began. During this time, those who spoke openly of Taiwanese independence (not to mention the dreaded Communists) would often disappear.

The United States supported the Chiang Kai-shek regime militarily, economically, technologically and ideologically during these years of repression. As the KMT suppressed dissent, it educated the populace that it was their destiny to liberate China from the "Communist bandits" who, according to the party line, stole China and deluded its people. But by the '70s, the West followed the lead of much of the Third World in giving diplomatic recognition to the mainland. On January 1, 1979, the Carter administration withdrew its ambassador to Taipei and set up a diplomatic mission in Beijing. The fiction of a "true China" under the jurisdiction of Taipei came to an end.

But coincidental to the fall from global recognition, Taiwan was becoming known as an "economic miracle," heralded by the West for its capitalist achievement. Such rhetoric made possible the emergence of a nascent Taiwanese nationalism in the late '70s. The opposition's response to Taiwan's changing position came slowly. Early independence activists referred not to "Taiwan," but "Formosa." It was only with the Western sanction of Taiwan as an economic power that citizens began to call themselves Taiwanese in a more or less regular way.

The critical event in this transformation was the so-called "Kaohsiung Incident" on December 10, 1979. That day marked the largest public protest in Taiwanese history, an anti-government march in Kaohsiung—the island's second-largest city. Clashes were triggered, many believe, by government-planted hooligans, who incited a violent police crackdown. Chen began his political career as legal counsel for defendants in the trials that followed. Many of those who were imprisoned after the protest later would become key political leaders in Taiwan during the '90s, including Vice President Lu, who served a five-year prison sentence for her activism.

"Outside the party" political organizations formed in opposition to the KMT during the '80s, though the nationalist government continued to crack down brutally against dis-

President Chen Shui-bian must balance two competing visions of manifest destiny.

sent. In 1986, acting on President Chiang Ching-kuo's statement that new parties would be allowed to compete in elections, the DPP formed on the platform of "Taiwan's readmittance" to the United Nations. But with threats of war from the mainland and a very low tolerance for independence activities by KMT authorities, the public would not support open and provocative demonstrations for independence. Most important to the public was (and is) the economic development of the island.



Taiwan closely watches military movements on the mainland.

By the early '90s, the DPP shrewdly severed its links to the most hardcore independence activists and turned its attention instead to general public dissatisfaction with lingering remnants of the KMT's totalitarian regime: corruption, links to organized crime and the general destruction of the island's environment. The DPP's first major, island-wide election victory, taking more than half of

YEH TAO-CHUAN YEH/AFP

the country's mayoralities and county magistrate seats, occurred in 1997. It followed a minor crime spree, which, fanned by the media, reflected middle-class discomfort with both the effects of economic achievement and the KMT's criminal connections. By then, Taiwan had transformed into a predominantly middle-class society, and the DPP had become its champion, appealing to professionals.

Despite the support of this core constituency, Chen and Lu won office through a good measure of luck. James Soong, a favorite of ordinary Taiwanese and the former "governor of Taiwan" (a remnant of the nationalist administration, which held that Taiwan was but a province and therefore needed a governor), left the KMT to run as an independent. Born on the mainland, his candidacy split the KMT's base of support, which includes many who view reunification as inevitable. For this reason and because of the continuing threats from Beijing, Chen must continue to balance two forms of nationalism: Chinese and Taiwanese.

Nonetheless, these are times for optimism. The democratic transformation of Taiwan appears permanent. Students in high schools expect to elect their student officers, vote buying (once a standard tactic of both parties) is on the wane, and people everywhere expect politicians to listen to them. This remarkable and truly revolutionary progress should put to rest the appalling assumption that "Chinese" (or for that matter East Asians) cannot act democratically because of some shared Confucian soul.

That Hong Kong and Macao were "returned" to China does not mean that Taiwan will follow, as many on the mainland wish to believe. Moreover, Chen has made it clear that the issue of unification is one for democratic elections—a proposal that terrifies Beijing, which says any plebiscite on the issue would be grounds for invasion. (A threat to which Chen brilliantly responds that he will not hold such an election unless Taiwan is attacked.)

For its part, the United States is officially tied to a "one China" policy. However, it is also subject to the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, which grants de facto recognition to Taiwanese independence and promises ongoing economic and military support. While not directly challenging the mainland's claim to sovereignty, the United States continues to provide advanced armaments to Taiwan, including F-16 fighter jets.

With national consciousness always subject to the whims of world opinion, Taiwan remains an unsettled case. Some in Taiwan envision a superpowered China/Taiwan alliance, and others long for a Taiwan that "stands up" for world recognition. The greatest hope rests with the fact that Taiwan's anomalous status discloses that nationalism need not hold every place and people in its grip, regardless of the often frightening efforts to make it do so. ■

Nickola Pazderic, who lived in Taiwan for much of the past decade, teaches East Asian anthropology at the University of Washington in Seattle.

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Continued from inside cover

movements can be mobilized against the political establishment. Equally compelling is the argument that an articulate, well-known, third-party candidate might do wonders raising public awareness of the Green Party. The Greens cannot expect to win over the plurality of the American populace. But that is not what Nader's presidential campaign is about. Instead, the Greens are using this campaign to get national media attention for the party and to shed light on some of the issues the corporate media would rather ignore.

In ridiculing the significance of lifestyle choices, Bleifuss misses something big. Greens see the need to fundamentally orient themselves away from consumerism and its associated bad habits. They think their example of eating healthy, buying locally, living simply and even ditching the car can have an effect on others. People have to begin to be informed of the need to make better lifestyle choices and to adopt a more ecologically lean mind set. This is what the Green Party is about.

**Jeff Buderer
Mayer, Arizona**

Those urging support for Ralph Nader for president this year amply illustrate why the left has been so marginalized in this country for the past 40 years.

No difference between Democrats and Republicans? President Bill Clinton has appointed two justices to the Supreme Court, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer. Both have been consistently pro-choice, pro-labor, progressive votes. What kind of Supreme Court would we now have if Bush Sr. had won in 1992 or Dole in 1996? What kind of Supreme Court justices would Gore appoint as opposed to Bush Jr.? The current pro-choice majority on the Supreme Court is 5 to 4. Think about that for a minute.

Or race relations: President Clinton appointed Bill Lann Lee, a former NAACP attorney, to be the top civil rights attorney in the country despite fierce opposition in the Senate. Lee is currently making sure Los Angeles officials stop sitting on their hands in the face of corruption in our police department. What kind of people do you think Bush would put in charge of civil rights? Does the name Clarence Thomas ring a bell?

I work in the labor movement, and I can tell you that Clinton, for all his faults, has made a positive difference. He appointed Wilma Liebman, a former union attorney, and Sarah Fox, who was a staff member for Ted Kennedy, to the National Labor Relations Board. He also appointed Leonard Page, former UAW counsel, to be the NLRB's general counsel. What kind of

appointments do you think Bush would make to these posts?

These are some of the reasons organized labor is supporting Al Gore. A vote for Nader is a vote thrown away—or even worse, the equivalent of a vote for Bush. Forget this nonsense about “leveraging” Gore with support for Nader; that's just giving aid and comfort to the enemy. The best “leverage” would be to give Gore a Democratic Congress, where he has to deal with Speaker Gephardt rather than Speaker Hastert.

C'mon, folks, this is not some leftist academic exercise! Be serious about power; I assure you the other side is quite so.

**David Koppelman
Los Angeles**

I wholeheartedly agree with Joel Bleifuss. When I first got involved in the left, many years ago in Chicago, two of the most important lessons I was taught were about strategy and power—the need to have a strategy in order to gain power to make change. Unfortunately much of the left, having forgotten the importance of strategy and power, spends most of its time tilting at windmills.

If we want to have a serious progressive presidential candidate at some point in the future, we should now be thinking about the 2008 or 2012 elections. The right didn't elect Reagan by starting their work in 1980; they started back in 1964 with the Goldwater campaign. A serious left in this country would now be developing a strategy to enhance the visibility of someone from the Progressive Caucus in Congress so that he or she could run a serious campaign at the end of a Gore/Bush tenure.

Bleifuss rightly says, “If Nader were serious about influencing the national discourse, he would have run in the Democratic primary.” Of the more than 50 members of the Progressive Caucus, all but one are Democrats. Labor continues to support the Democratic Party. And yes, the Democratic Party continues to move to the center under the thrall of corporate interests, but it remains the one place where any possibility of progressive public dialogue can take place. Sure, we leftists can talk among ourselves, but, frankly, one episode of *The West Wing* with Martin Sheen has more impact on national politics than months of “dialogue” on the left.

The Greens, the New Party and all the rest are simply one more way for the left to avoid developing and implementing a strategy. How much easier it is to preserve principle than to face the reality, as Bleifuss calls on us to do.

**Christine Riddiough
Washington**

Joel Bleifuss replies: The above letters are a selection of those we received discussing the merits of Ralph Nader's campaign for president. We appreciate everyone's contribution to this worthwhile debate.

Marc Schuler asks where the reference to the two-party system is in our Constitution. There isn't one. But as the next letter writer, Richard Clark, rightly explains, the present two-party dictatorship is maintained though state ballot laws. Clark points out that viable third parties could exist if states replaced their winner-take-all electoral systems with one of the tried-and-true systems of proportional representation. Like Clark, if I lived in Indiana, I too would vote for Nader. But I live in a state where my vote counts, therefore I don't plan to throw it away.

Beverly Woods asks what political change I am hoping to accomplish by criticizing the political acumen of Nader supporters. For starters, I would hope that four years from now we are not again faced with another Quixotic, progressive, third-party campaign for president. A friend of my son had plans to spend the summer volunteering for Nader, but he had trouble connecting with the campaign. Neither the Green Party nor the Nader campaign has a phone listed in directory information for Chicago. Hello? This is the nation's third-largest city. Need I say more?

Rini Kilcoyne asks us not to forget “The Year of the Woman.” Emily's List should be given credit for helping put more women in Congress. But let us also not forget that almost all those women were Democrats, a couple were Republicans, and none were from a third party. Kilcoyne goes on to say it is people like me who are “keeping us from achieving our goals” because we are “unwilling to believe we have the power to make our own political reality.” Of course you can make your own reality, but in politics it helps if that reality is grounded in the real world—that place where presidential campaigns have offices with phone numbers.

Finally, Jeff Buderer accuses me of “ridiculing the significance of lifestyle choices.” Be assured, I take lifestyle choices very seriously. And in the same way one should avoid making irresponsible personal decisions, one should avoid making irresponsible political ones. Informing people of the need for them “to make better lifestyle choices” and “to adopt a more ecologically lean mind set” does indeed seem to be “what the Green Party is about.” To me, that sounds like the basis for noble educational campaign, not a presidential one. ☐

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Human Wrongs

By Paul Hockenos

Sadly, the epic work of the Nobel Prize-winning Yugoslavian writer Ivo Andric, *The Bridge on the Drina*, has overshadowed most of this great writer's other works, at least for international audiences confined to translations. The novel, a masterful tale of a Bosnian village that spans four centuries, undoubtedly deserves its place as

the men are ultimately united in their shared plight, having been assigned to undesirable posts on the western fringe of the Ottoman Empire. For the most part, their attitude toward Bosnia and its peoples is saturated with scorn and contempt, a disrespect that the local populations return at every opportunity.

Discussed in this essay:

Bosnian Chronicle

By Ivo Andric

Arcade

442 pages, \$14.95

Imagining the Balkans

By Maria Todorova

Oxford University Press

257 pages, \$19.95

The Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers, 1804-1999

By Misha Glenny

Viking

772 pages, \$34.95

Masters of the Universe?

NATO's Balkan Crusade

Edited by Tariq Ali

Verso

429 pages, \$20

Is Dayton Failing? Bosnia Four Years after the Peace Agreement

By the International Crisis Group

www.intl-crisis-group.org

Deliver Us from Evil: Peacekeepers, Warlords and a World of Endless Conflict

By William Shawcross

Simon & Schuster

416 pages, \$27.50

Kosovo: War and Revenge

By Tim Judah

Yale University Press

348 pages, \$17.95

Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond

By Michael Ignatieff

Metropolitan

246 pages, \$23

a classic of European literature. Yet Andric's lesser known *Bosnian Chronicle* is every bit its equal, and perhaps even more insightful when it comes to making sense out of the stuttering efforts of the Great Powers, now blandly dubbed "the international community," to engage in the Balkans.

Set in the central Bosnian town of Travnik at the beginning of the 19th century, the novel tells the story of the emissaries of the three foreign powers in Bosnia at the time: the Ottoman Empire's vizier, the Napoleonic consul and the Austro-Hungarian attaché. From their residencies in the damp, inhospitable Lasva Valley, the three rivals ruthlessly vie with one another for diplomatic advantage, devising intrigues and plots to outmaneuver the other in the name of their empires. But as fierce as their competition is,

In one choice passage, the French consul's open-minded young assistant returns to Travnik after a meeting with the local Franciscan friar, Brother Ivo. He tells of his conversation with the friar who, in response to a remark about the miserable condition of the roads, explained that Bosnian Catholics purposely fail to maintain and even intentionally destroy the roads to deter unwanted visitors, principally the Turkish authorities. The Ottomans, on the other hand, keep the roads in disrepair to limit the contact of meddlesome Christian countries with the Catholic and Orthodox peasantries. The senior French consul explodes at his subordinate:

"It is indefensible," said the consul, "and you cannot explain it with any rational interpretation. The backwardness of these people comes in the first

place from their ill-will, their 'innate ill-will' as the vizier puts it. This ill-will explains everything."

"All right, but then how do you explain this ill-will itself? Where they get it from?"

"Where from? Where from? It's innate, I tell you. You'll have a chance to be convinced of that yourself."

"All right, but until I am convinced, allow me to stand by my view that both the ill-will and goodness of people were products of the circumstances in which they live and develop. It is not goodness that drives us to build roads, but the desire to extend profitable communications and our influence, and many people regard that as 'ill-will' on our part. So our ill-will drives us to make roads while theirs drives them to hate and destroy them whenever they can."

In the end, with Napoleon's reversals on the battlefield, first the French consul and then the Habsburg emissary pack up and leave. The local Bosnian Muslims sit beneath a tree smugly triumphant after having endured the unwelcome visitors in their town for too long. The village elder speaks out:

"Seven years," said Hamdi Bey thoughtfully, drawing out the words, "seven years! And do you remember how much noise and excitement there was because of those consuls and that ... that ... Bunaparta? Bunaparta this, and Bunaparta that. He's going to do this, he won't do that. ... And—it came and it passed. The Emperors rose up and they smashed Bunaparta. The consuls will clear out of Travnik. People will refer to them for another year or so. The children will play consuls and khavazes on the river bank, riding on sticks, and then they too will be forgotten as though they had never existed. And everything will be as it always has been, by God's will."

So similar are the intrigues, infighting and complaints of the characters of the *Bosnian Chronicle* to those of today's representatives of the Great Powers in the Balkans, one might plausibly conclude that the current efforts of the dozens of countries and hundreds of diplomatic, supranational and non-governmental organizations,

whether undertaken according to high-minded ideals or cynical geopolitics, are doomed to run aground, victims of Balkan intransigence and Western ineptitude. Nor does the hodgepodge assembly of peacekeeping forces, observer groups, U.N., OSCE and other assorted missions scattered across the former Yugoslavia today instill much confidence or respect.

most part in reaction to conflicts, or ex post facto to reverse their consequences. They certainly were not preceded by an informed debate over the universality of human rights, criteria for humanitarian intervention, or the *raison d'être* of post-Cold War peacekeeping missions. However, albeit belatedly, they have sparked such a conversation.

make these organizations work effectively, rather than whether they serve any purpose at all.

Still, the criteria for "humanitarian interventions," their goals and permissible costs remain largely undefined. What quantity (or quality) of human rights violations justifies—or compels—military intervention? Where do humanitarian priorities overlap or, as the case may be,

give way to economic and security interests? How can Western governments employ moral arguments to justify intervention in Kosovo and then not in Chechnya or Africa? And what lessons have been learned from a decade of misguided policy in the Balkans?

Maria Todorova, a Bulgarian historian who teaches in the United States, is convinced that Western academics, journalists and policy-makers don't understand the Balkans, and probably never will. In her clever little book *Imagining the Balkans*, Todorova argues that the geographical designation "Balkan" has become a pejorative classification that demonizes the region's peoples and cultures. Over the course of two centuries, "Balkan" has become a signifier

for the tribal, the backward and the primitive, as well as a synonym for nationalistic fragmentation and chronic political instability.

As Todorova points out, even the geographical name itself, which refers to the entire peninsula that stretches from Romania to Greece, is a misnomer. In fact "Balkan" was the Ottoman Turkish name for what ancient and medieval geographers called Haemus, the mountain chain that cuts across Bulgaria parallel to the River Danube. For centuries, the ancient Greek belief that Haemus extended all the way from the Adriatic to the Black Sea was accepted as fact. Even into the late 19th century, the peninsula was referred to by its classical names, like "Hellenic," "Illyrian," "Dardanian" or designations inherited from the centuries of Ottoman presence: "European Turkey" or "Oriental Peninsula." Other labels like "Slavo-Greek Peninsula" reflected ethnic criteria.



Sightseeing in Novi Sad.

In Bosnia, 30,000 NATO-led troops and perhaps as many civilian internationals are entering a fifth year, laboriously implementing the Dayton peace agreement, often against the will of most of the countries' elected nationalist leaders. In Kosovo, 42,500 troops crisis-manage a seething ethnic conflict, while more soldiers keep an uneasy peace in neighboring Macedonia. The narrow streets of Podgorica, Montenegro's capital, are backed up with jeeps and Land Rovers freshly spray-painted with the by now familiar alphabet soup of international acronyms. And in Croatia, the newly elected democratic government will give the OSCE monitoring mission there a convenient excuse, like the Napoleonic and Habsburg consuls, to soon throw in the towel and get out.

This dog's breakfast of missions and mandates has sprung up ad hoc for the

Unlike in the United States, the European debate starts from the assumption that supranational bodies (like the United Nations, OSCE, etc.), peacekeeping missions and conflict-prevention measures are necessary for the kinds of conflicts likely to be faced

What lessons have Western governments learned from a decade of misguided policy in the Balkans?

in the next decades. U.S.-perceived threats, such as long-range missile attacks from North Korea and Iran, seem less pressing, to say the least. In Europe, the question is more how to

By the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars, the name "Balkan" had become established despite controversy over the exact expanse of territory it covered. Some geographers lumped in Hungary, all of Turkey, Moldova and even Cyprus. Today, though still ambiguous, there seems to be a general agreement, at least among Western experts, that the Balkans include Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, all countries of the former Yugoslavia, part of Romania and western Turkey. It is a classification that rankles the Slovenes and Croats but that most of the other constituent nations employ without shame.

Todorova shows how the Balkans and the concept of "balkanization" became loaded with pejorative political connotations that have unfairly—and unfavorably—produced stereotypes that influence Western thinking, and therefore Western policy, on the Balkans today. In its crassest form, there are the "ancient hatreds" and "Balkan ghosts" theories that purport to explain the hopeless plight of congenitally xenophobic peoples who cannot be kept from one another's throats. The conclusion usually drawn is that the past decade of conflicts in Southeastern Europe were somehow inevitable, the product of "innate ill-will," and thus not worthy of the West's time nor money, much less soldiers' lives. It is an argument that President Clinton has employed at times, and that has resonated through Western policy from the early 1990s to the present.

As thorough as Todorova's argument is, it stops short of telling us what is Balkan, if anything at all. Also, even she seems to admit at times that there is more than a grain of truth to some of the stereotypes she so deftly deconstructs. For example, the propensity to believe the most far-fetched conspiracy theories, to blame everyone but oneself for problems, and the irrational stubborn pride that even has its own word in Serbo-Croatian—*inat*—are characteris-

tics (though certainly not innate) that are essential to understanding the Balkans and engaging with its people. In the end, the explanations of the sort the young French consul and Brother Ivo offer bring us further than Todorova. They don't deny that the roads in



Crossing into Macedonia.

Bosnia are poor, but explain why they are that way.

No less acerbic about foreign misconceptions of the Balkans, Misha Glenny shows how two centuries of Great Power misadventures made the Balkans what they are today. But Glenny, in his 772-page *The Balkans*, unfortunately offers us little new substance for the debate. His study takes readers from the Serbian rebellions of the early 19th century to the present with colorful, engaging portraits of the Balkan dramatis personae and artful descriptions of some of the pivotal events—from the 1804 slaughter of the *knezes* to the Cazin rebellion and beyond. His main thesis, not particularly unique, is that over the centuries the Great Powers have had a tremendous, overwhelmingly negative impact on Southeastern Europe.

His departure from turgid academic prose helps, though it is a deviation sure to rankle traditional historians. And yet, in the end, one wonders where this book brings us. Glenny, a first-rate Balkans correspondent in

the early '90s, states that he felt compelled to step back from journalism and turn to history to grasp the roots and causes of the recent Balkan wars. But his final chapter sheds little if any new light on the tragic events of the past decade. In fact, the book says less

than did his on-the-ground dispatches, thoughtful essays and "journalist" books of past years, despite their controversial, often Serb-sympathetic angles and, as he himself claims, historical naïveté. One has to wonder whether Glenny would have learned more spending a few months in besieged Sarajevo than combing the archives and libraries as he did for six years.

If misunderstanding the Balkans is part of the problem, the nature and scope of

the plethora of peacekeeping missions in the Balkans is another. In *Deliver Us from Evil*, veteran journalist William Shawcross provides eyewitness accounts of conflicts in Bosnia, Cambodia and Iraq and international efforts to address them. Unfortunately, at least in the case of Bosnia, his account covers little new ground and lets the United Nations off the hook much too easily for its dismal performance during the war years. He weakly concludes that a contradiction exists between the moral imperative to intervene in humanitarian catastrophes and the resolve of Western powers to sacrifice their blood and treasure.

It was exactly this lack of resolve that culminated in the Dayton peace accords in November 1995, a pact between the three warring parties in Bosnia, which on paper kept the country together while simultaneously accepting its effective partition along ethnic lines. The unenviable job of making this monstrosity come to life was handed to an inexperienced, quickly assembled peacekeeping mission.

Four years later, according to the watchdog agency International Crisis Group (ICG), the multibillion-dollar effort is foundering. Its report, *Is Dayton Failing?*, delivers a bleak picture indeed of the situation on the ground in Bosnia. The country, it concludes, has "three de facto model-ethnic entities, three separate armies, three separate police forces, and national government exists mostly on paper and operates at the mercy of the entities."

War criminals, the report rightly maintains, remain at large and power remains concentrated in the hands of nationalist leaders intent on blocking the peace process. "The effect has been to cement wartime ethnic cleansing and maintain ethnic cleansers in power," the report concludes.

Is Dayton Failing? properly gives the international community low marks on its efforts to facilitate refugee return and establish multiethnic governing institutions, economic reform and fair elections. Although the international community's powers, and will to use them, have steadily increased since 1995, obstruction-minded politicians have managed to outwit the international authorities in a manner that would have made the old Travnik boys proud.

And yet, as tends to be the case with some ICG reports, this one often goes overboard, solid analysis petering out into off-the-cuff judgments. In Bosnia, one can see the glass half-full as well. There has been hard-won progress in every aspect of the peace process, even in the most difficult categories like police reform and refugee return. Importantly, there is still forward momentum in Bosnia, strengthened recently by the successful launch of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe—an umbrella body to coordinate policy and raise funds for the region—and robust new guidelines to create a self-sustaining Bosnian state

from the international body that oversees the peace process.

But this progress is laborious and costly, and it is no secret that donor countries are losing patience with Bosnia. The ICG authors wouldn't disagree that the Dayton process must be

of markets, and strategically—through the long arm of NATO. The ostensible humanitarian concerns that triggered the military action in Kosovo were nothing but a guise to save NATO, undermine European security initiatives and ultimately construct colonial out-

posts in southeastern Europe. In Kosovo, the human rights violations, refugee exodus and massacres were either trumped-up lies or tragedies intentionally sparked by Western policy. "NATO was prepared to trigger a humanitarian disaster in order to achieve humanitarian goals, i.e. NATO occupation of Kosovo," writes the volume's editor, Tariq Ali.

Johnstone's is one of the crassest of the edition's many heavy-handed tracts. She tells the tale of an

elaborate plot in which the United States is "striving to replace the system that outlaws war by a system that uses war to punish outlaws. Who the outlaws are is decided by the U.S. ... This vigilante system corresponds to a dominant American worldview of a capitalist system inherently capable of meeting all human needs, marred only by the wrong-doings of evil outcasts." To Johnstone, the "obvious, short three-letter explanation" for the Kosovo intervention is oil: "All roads lead to the Caspian, and through Kosovo."

It's hard to even begin to refute an argument that treats Slobodan Milosevic as a social democratic "evil outcast" of capitalism or refers to Western policy as "pure Hitlerism," whatever that is. Most of the counter-arguments have already been made in these pages, and if they didn't convince those inclined to such conspiracy theories then, they won't now. It is sad indeed that such once-sharp social critics have been unable to develop and refine their critique as historical events have altered its context. In the end, the crudeness of their argu-



Finding refuge in Bosnia.

accelerated if it is to become self-sustainable before aid dries up. And yet their devastating analysis could lead to the opposite conclusion: that Dayton is a flop and the international community should stop wasting its time and money. Instead, perseverance is required, including, as the ICG report concludes, the robust involvement of the NATO-led SFOR contingent to assist civilian peacemakers in breaking the nationalists' hold on power.

The harshest critics of the current Great Powers involvement in the Balkans belong to a small group of thinkers whose numbers include *In These Times* contributing editor Diana Johnstone. In *Masters of the Universe?* this group, profoundly suspicious of Western, above all U.S., intentions in the Balkans, contributes a number of like-minded, often repetitive arguments against "NATO's Balkan crusade."

According to this narrative, the U.S.-driven war in Kosovo is part of an "imperial project" to secure U.S. global hegemony in the New World Order, both economically, through the control

ments undermines some of the provocative and occasionally valid points they try to make.

In another class entirely is Tim Judah's superb *Kosovo: War and Revenge*. Judah, who has covered the conflicts in Yugoslavia for over a decade, has produced much more than a journalist's account of the war in Kosovo. *Kosovo*, which complements his fine book *The Serbs*, provides the most thorough and even-handed treatment to date of the 1989-1999 period in Kosovo, a complex and woefully under-researched decade critical to understanding the crisis that led to the NATO bombing.

Kosovo fills valuable gaps in the historical record where it examines the Kosovar Albanians ultimately unsuccessful strategy of passive resistance and the underground phantom state funded by Kosovar diaspora groups abroad. It is also the best treatment available of the internal politics and strategies of Kosovar leadership, including the political and ideological battles that eventually spawned the KLA.

One of this book's most important contributions is the blow-by-blow account of the February and March 1999 Rambouillet negotiations. Judah was there, and in addition to his own observations he relies on highly placed sources to recount the diplomatic brinkmanship that finally, when it collapsed, triggered the bombing of Yugoslavia. He argues, in contrast to Johnstone and others, that Rambouillet was meant to succeed—and could have, if the Serb delegation had negotiated seriously and in good faith. But the Serbs, convinced the Kosovar Albanians would never sign and that NATO would never bomb, abstained from real negotiations. The bombing, which everyone for different reasons seemed to think would last a few days, went on for 10 weeks. The war took 10,000 lives.

Judah also refutes the curious charge that at Rambouillet the Serbs were delivered an ultimatum to sign on to an occupation of all of Yugoslavia, a condition that the Serb negotiating team never could have accepted. This controversy revolves around the allegedly mysterious Appendix B, an annex that stated that NATO troops should be given "unrestricted passage" throughout Yugoslavia. According to Judah, Appendix B was a starting point for negotiations, a wish list for NATO

officers. It may well have been negotiable—most probably formulated as a bargaining chip—but at no point did the Serbs budge from their refusal to consider the principle of an international military force in Kosovo, be it NATO, the United Nations or any other. In fact, Appendix B was never even discussed at Rambouillet.

While Western involvement in the Balkans isn't a grand imperialist plot, it is equally naïve to see it solely as an altruistic matter of human rights. Western Europe and the United States have concrete economic and geo-strategic interests in a stable Southeastern European region. Bloody wars on the European periphery create hundreds of thousands of costly refugees, disrupt trade routes, paralyze the economies of weak neighboring states and throw a wrench into the ongoing processes of European integration. There is also little doubt that NATO was eager to prove itself indispensable in the post-Cold war context.

Yet it is equally indisputable that the humanitarian tragedy of the past decade of Balkan conflicts was a central factor in the decision-making processes that led to the Kosovo war. In *Virtual War*, astute journalist and commentator Michael Ignatieff examines the way Western governments have used military power to protect human rights and the emerging morality governing the use of force for humanitarian purposes.

Although an outspoken proponent of NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia, Ignatieff warns that democratic societies must come to grips with the new exigencies of "virtual war" if its application is not ultimately to be counterproductive. With

Kosovo at his test case, he argues that virtual war is a phenomenon qualitatively different from classic military models of battlefield war inherited from the 20th century. The Kosovo campaign was unprecedented in that it was risk-free and blood-free—for those who waged it. It achieved its objective without a single NATO combat fatality and marks the advent of a new kind of high-technology, precision warfare that entails little or no sacrifice from the countries able to fight it.

Of the many questions virtual war raises, one is that if military action is cost-free, what democratic restraints will remain on the resort to force? Ignatieff worries that democratic institutions and procedures designed to check the executive use of military force have themselves become virtual. The public is consulted, but only through opinion polls, while the formal institutions of democracy are bypassed. He argues passionately for a renewal of both national and international institutions with the power to refute the decision to go to war.

The new Great Powers also must realize that military intervention in the name of human rights is a fallacy unless it is followed up with credible, professional peacekeeping missions that will help indigenous democratic forces create self-sustaining democratic institutions and political cultures. While war is now waged with multimillion-dollar state-of-the-art technology, conflict prevention and crisis management capabilities lag far behind, woefully underfunded and employed half-heartedly as symbolic afterthoughts. If the rhetoric of human rights is to be taken seriously at all, in the end it will be on the ground—and not at 15,000 feet. ■



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Age of Innocence

By Catherine Tumber

The third-generation son of a Russian-Jewish immigrant family, Jonathan Kozol graduated from Harvard—like his father before

**Ordinary Resurrections:
Children in the Years of Hope**
By Jonathan Kozol
Crown
336 pages, \$25

him—and continued down the path of secularization and cultural assimilation. He originally nurtured literary ambitions and preoccupied himself with the existential themes that so absorbed early Cold War writers and artists across the Western world: His 1958 senior honors thesis explored *Hamlet's* “metaphysical bravado,” and his first book was not a work of journalism, but a novel with the unfortunate title *Fume of Poppies*, completed in Paris after finishing a Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford.

Back in the Boston area, Kozol had not yet established his vocational footing when, in the summer of 1964, he heard the horrifying news out of Birmingham that four little girls had been killed in a church bombing—a spineless act of violence against the ongoing struggle for black civil rights. Kozol had found his calling. He decided right then to dedicate his life to fighting racial injustice in the public schools.

He began his political education that fall working as a substitute teacher in Roxbury, Boston's most impoverished black ghetto. Inspired by the pedagogical zeal of John Holt, who called for de-institutionalizing the learning process, and Paolo Friere, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Kozol was summarily sacked by the end of the term for reading Langston Hughes' poetry to his class. But

he left behind a powerful account of the experience in his fiercely polemical, bitterly impassioned second book, *Death at an Early Age: The Destruction of the Hearts and Minds of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools* (1967), which promptly won the National Book Award.

Kozol continued to work as a teacher, an activist and, above all, a journalist, turning out one book after another on his involvement in the community school movement, the infamous mid-'70s busing crisis, and adult literacy programs. Nearly in despair over Reagan's attack on liberal social programs, by the late '80s he got

country, Kozol's voice became more personal and, as the title suggests, inclined to the spiritual cadences peculiar to our time. The same is true of *Ordinary Resurrections*. Indeed, it is safe to say that here Jonathan Kozol “got religion.” Kozol has found salvation, of sorts, in children.

In *Ordinary Resurrections*, Kozol's gathering religious sensibility—entwined with his personal and political autobiography—is woven into a larger portrait of inner-city children's education. Kozol returns to the South Bronx neighborhood of Mott Haven, the scene of malign neglect and threadbare survival documented in his earlier books, to gauge the effects of neoliberalism and the new economy. He spends most of his time in the area's two public grammar schools and

middle school, as well as in St. Ann's Episcopal Church, which provides after-school programs, food for the homeless, legal assistance and many other community services under the intrepid leadership of Mother Martha, a former lawyer and Radcliffe alumna.

There are plenty of other everyday heroes here too, like the formerly homeless, hard-working single mother who lost one son to the dangers of the city, another to prison, and struggles mightily to nurture and financially support her third—a precocious, asthmatic, hyperactive 8-year-old who could easily go in the wrong direction. “Miss Rosa,” the principal of P.S. 30, is a model of effective administration, who commands teachers' loyalty and students' affectionate respect. But the heart of this book lies with the children themselves, and how they make sense of the world when they are given properly insulated spaces in which to thrive.

Kozol is a gifted, unusually lucid storyteller, who is at his best when portraying the personalities of individual children alongside the post-modern barbarities that frame their life chances. Among many others, most prominently featured are little “Elio,” a diminutive, occasionally shy, 6-year-old Hispanic boy, whose struggle with an absent father, dyslexia and a vulnerably affectionate nature all too readily reduce



KEN FIRESTONE

out of the classroom altogether and began exploring the rootless and violent street existence that had come to render school utterly beside the point for so many children and young adults. In his most recent book, *Amazing Grace* (1995), on children living in the South Bronx, the poorest congressional district in the

him to tears or combativeness, and "Pineapple," a robustly bossy little black girl, perfectly comfortable in her chubby body, who has an uncanny grasp of the principles of leadership—when to assert authority, when to leaven with humor, when to nurture the most fragile reed without cultivating dependency. He wants the reader to understand, first and foremost, that these children of the working poor are not different from kids from other walks of life. They are every bit as talented, curious, flexible and idiosyncratic as children living just a few miles up the highway in affluent Scarsdale.

In Kozol's early days as a teacher, liberal intellectuals resisted the notion that a "culture of poverty" rendered poor children inherently disadvantaged in the classroom. But now, he rightly observes, much of this resistance has not only dropped away, but given rise to the repellent notion that kids from poor families are plagued with so many "pathologies" that they are no longer children in any of the usual senses of the word, but "'premature adults,' perhaps precocious criminals, even 'predators.'"

The results are appalling. Such "labeling" provides intellectual justification not only for rigidly segregated neighborhoods, but for harsh discipline in the classroom—with predictably numbing effects on creative thought. Further, writing these children off as "morally disabled" feeds the aggressive complacency that permits school districts to be funded at staggeringly unequal levels: New York City spends less than half of what surrounding suburbs target for each pupil, and the state spends 18 times as much to incarcerate juveniles in detention centers as it does to educate them in the South Bronx. Such gross inequity has an avalanche effect, from the high attrition rate of good teachers who fumble through the early years of their careers and then take their hard-won experience to higher-paying suburban schools, to the departure of the best students to magnet schools at the high school level.

De facto segregation plays out in other ways that dramatically affect poor children. Like many poor, urban neighborhoods, the South Bronx is home to a toxic waste incinerator spewing particles that irritate the lungs and account for disproportionate asthma rates among poor children like Elio and Pineapple.

And more than an third of their fathers are not at home, but circulating through the prison system upstate.

Although *Ordinary Resurrections* is not a work of policy analysis per se, Kozol raises two policy issues. He repeats the call issued in *Amazing Grace* for equalizing school funding—an eminently sensible and fair-minded suggestion that will probably get nowhere in the current political climate. More novel is his critique of the recent fad for "outcome-based" educational reform, modeled on business methods for achieving success in the market. This approach, which he roundly opposes, is especially detrimental to poor children, since it has also become the language of welfare reform.

Some educators consider poor kids not children but "premature adults," "precocious criminals," even "predators."

At lavish meetings of business leaders and consultants, Kozol reports, inner-city children are regarded as "future entry-level workers." "The right kind of investment," according to one CEO, "from conception to age five, will pay back every dollar we spend at least four for one, plus interest, plus inflation. I don't know of a factory anybody can build that will give that kind of return." While well-off kids are tracked for college, poor children—regarded by businessmen-cum-educators as "product" and "futures" like so many soy beans—are lucky to be funneled toward low-paid work as clerical workers and manual laborers. So much for the new meritocracy.

More than anything else, *Ordinary Resurrections* is a sustained illustration of what children's blossoming sensibilities do need: kindness, gentle instruction, time to move at a slower, more exploratory pace and, yes, love. But it is also the story of Kozol's spiritual awakening in the face of his elderly parents' illness and his own mortality. Single and childless, and without any real sense of his own religious tradition, he finds renewal

in the company of the children, and for this reason he visits Mott Haven whenever he feels the "need" long after the manuscript is complete. But there is more to it than that. What emerges in bare outline is a theology of redemptive innocence, whose leveling, life-affirming power is summoned to ground our floundering democracy and arrest the alarming stratification of wealth.

The children pronounce, Solomon-like, on the nature of God, on the mysteries of liturgy, on questions of who is trustworthy (they trust Kozol and Mr. Rogers; they distrust a patronizing documentary filmmaker), on prayer—and Kozol sits at their feet. No, that's not quite it. He develops "friendship" with them. One might claim that friendship is distinctively ennobling and sweet because it is the only human bond shaped freely by moral equals. Yet it is the very notion that children are not only spiritually whole souls in the eyes of God, but whole moral personalities that Kozol wants to impress on us. Conflating moral and spiritual life in this way, and making childhood innocence the spiritual basis of democratic ethics, Kozol reflects left-liberalism's recent pedocentric turn.

But children are not our moral equals. They are persons in formation, which is why adults should protect and nurture them, and why we are so existentially shaken when a child's life is cut short. For all its moving poignancy and compelling social analysis, there is a deep irony in Kozol's book. By his own reckoning, the single most important institution in Mott Haven is St. Ann's. In innumerable ways, the church has provided the stability, discipline and care that has anchored this neighborhood and made it possible to guide the ordinary resurrection of childhood toward the tenuous worldly hope of finding work and meaningful adult responsibility. But the church finds its strength in that one, extraordinary resurrection it claims took place long ago. And the decision to commit oneself to that faith—or not—is an adult choice, not an innocent childhood predisposition. ■

Catherine Tumber co-edited *A Strange Freedom: The Best of Howard Thurman on Religious Experience and Public Life (Beacon)*. She is currently a fellow of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research.

Latin America

By Jon Wiener

Ricky Martin, Sammy Sosa, Jennifer Lopez, Christina Aguilera—something is happening to American popular culture, and in his new book, *Magical Urbanism*, Mike Davis pulls together the startling facts,

Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the U.S. Big City
By Mike Davis
Verso
172 pages, \$19

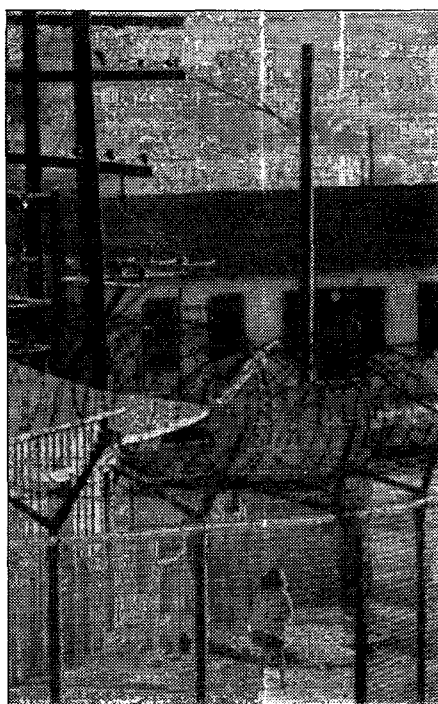
identifies the underlying trends and considers the significance of the Latinization of America. In this short book—172 action-filled pages—Davis brings his characteristic analytical energy, eye for detail and exhaustive research to bear on an important phenomenon that remains mostly unexplored.

We think of Mike Davis as an historian and theorist of Los Angeles and Southern California, but this book shows he has been a fast learner about New York City. There, Latinos became the second-biggest “ethno-racial group” in 1996, surpassing blacks. Davis notes that, although there were “no street celebrations in El Barrio or Quisqueya (Washington Heights) ... it was an epochal event all the same”—the only historical precedents were the ascendancy of the Irish during the 1860s and the black migration that peaked in the 1960s.

Los Angeles is of course central to Davis’ analysis of trends: He points to the astonishing transformation the city has undergone since the early ’60s, when L.A. had the highest percentage of native-born white Protestants of the 10 biggest U.S. cities, to the present when Latinos outnumber Anglos in L.A. County by more than a million. In L.A., Davis has been studying the maps, trying to count the pockets of Latinos in the white landscape. That task is growing increasingly difficult, because, as he writes, a “perceptual figure-ground reversal is imminent”—it won’t be long before the maps show pockets of white settlement (the foothills and the beaches) in a Latino landscape. Indeed Latinos

now outnumber blacks in six of the 10 biggest U.S. cities, including Houston, San Diego, Phoenix and San Antonio. Detroit is the only major city where the Latino population is not growing.

What’s the significance of these changes? Davis begins by noting the lack



The border functions like a dam, creating a reservoir of labor on the Mexican side to be tapped on demand.

of consensus about how to name the group in question—each generation has had its preferred term, and there is no consensus today that “Latinos” is superior to “Hispanics.” He reminds us that the ’60s conception of “Chicano” included a rejection of the “Mexican-American” identity in favor of a separatist claim to a distinctive origin in southwestern Aztlan—which seems surprisingly

parochial today. Davis concludes that different groups have different issues in this debate—for Mexicans, “the border” is emerging as an organizing concept, while Puerto Ricans recently voted to endorse “none of the above” in a choice between statehood and independence. And of course, the Cubans have almost nothing in common with the Dominicans who arrived in the ’80s.

The most vivid example of Latinization for Davis can be found in the “Siamese twins” of San Diego and Tijuana—the latter of which is now the bigger city. In fact, Tijuana is the fastest growing city in North America, with the single exception of Las Vegas—where a considerable proportion of the growth depends on Latino construction workers, maids and food service workers. Of course, the border is the organizational center of the Tijuana-San Diego complex; Davis argues that it “functions like a dam, creating a reservoir of labor-power on the Mexican side that can be tapped on demand by the secret aqueduct managed by Polleros, iguanas and coyotes”—smugglers of workers. The border, Davis also notes, has quickly become “North America’s toxic sink” as the by-products of factories on the Mexican side are dumped into rivers or released into the air.

If San Diego provides an example of one kind of Latinized city, New York provides the other with a striking variety of immigrant peoples and neighborhoods—21 major Latino neighborhoods in four boroughs, some of which are predominantly Puerto Rican, some Dominican, some South American. But what distinguishes the barrios of Gotham from those of Southern California is that every one of New York’s barrios includes large non-Latino minorities, ranging from blacks to Asians to Russians. Segregated Los Angeles, however, has its own version of multiculturalism: Asian capital is emerging as a crucial employer of Latino labor, as Chinese manufacturers set up plants on both sides of the Pacific Rim—in Taipei, Guangzhou as well as Tijuana and East L.A.

Part of the “magic” in Davis’ title is found in the transformation Latinos have brought to dying urban spaces. The changes are most visible in Watts, where virtually every street has been transformed by Latino homeownership.

Entire neighborhoods and business districts have been revived by the immigrant energy and burgeoning Latino family population—Davis' favorite example is Huntington Park in Southeast Los Angeles County, whose geriatric Main Street has become the festive center of Mexican immigrant life in L.A.

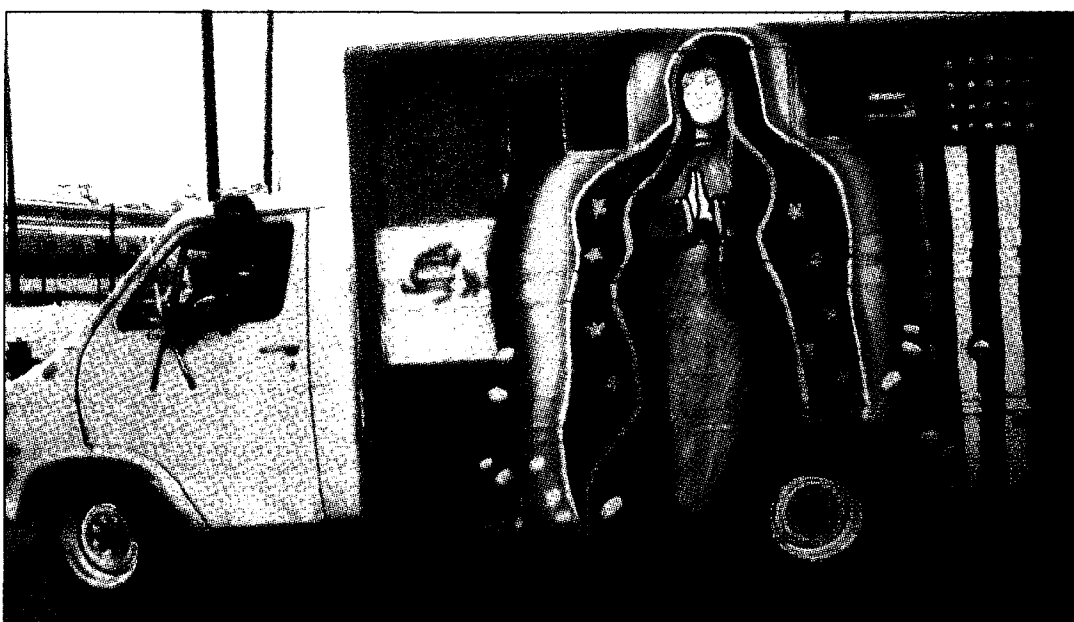
Other little-known features of the phenomenon of Latino immigration are the strong ties that exist between particular immigrant neighborhood communities in U.S. cities and towns in Mexico or Puerto Rico or El Salvador. This of course is nothing new—immigrant communities even in the 19th century maintained strong ties and had considerable back-and-forth movement between towns in the old world—but now there are entire regions of Mexico whose economy depends on

exporting labor to, and getting money back from, East L.A.

Davis ends his vivid and compelling book with a chapter on the Janitors for Justice campaign in Los Angeles, where (shortly after Davis' book was published) the recent victory had national significance. That was the

result not of magic, but of energy and commitment that provide a brilliant example for the rest of the American labor movement. ■

Jon Wiener is the author of Gimme Some Truth: The John Lennon FBI Files (University of California Press).



CAMILO JOSÉ VERGARA

Ice cream trucks, or *trocas*, are mobile works of folk art in Los Angeles.

Day-Glo Bacchanalia

By Jason Sholl

Over the past few years, the rave scene has become an unmistakable fixture on the commercial landscape. A recent Volkswagen ad revives The Orb's techno classic "Little Fluffy Clouds," while a Phillips commercial showcases a maverick parrot grooving to Talvin Singh's electronic bhangra. Underground electronic pioneers, such as Moby and The Chemical Brothers, now record bestselling albums and make center-stage appearances at the Grammys. Rave's frenzied dancers, day-glo costumes and trippy light shows surface everywhere from *Beverly Hills 90210* to *Time* magazine.

Many will call Greg Harrison's directorial debut, *Groove*, the final sell-out. *Groove* attempts to bring the rave

subculture—with its giant illegal parties, mass ecstasy use, and pulsing technobacchanalia—to life on the big screen. One can already see the tabloid headlines: "13-year-old nearly dies of ecstasy overdose: 'Groove made me do it.'" But while Sony (who picked up *Groove* for a cool \$1.5 million at Sundance this year) is doubtlessly counting on such hype to ensure a summer blockbuster, Harrison stays clear of the familiar media exaggerations. Unlike much recent fanfare, *Groove* attempts to penetrate beyond rave's eye-catching surfaces. The film attempts to take rave culture seriously on its own terms.

This is a daunting challenge. After all, like its techno soundtrack, a rave is repetitive, gives rise to fragmentary conversation or none at all, and requires

drugs to elicit the full effect. To insiders, a rave represents an oceanic feeling beyond the reach of language. To outsiders, a rave is just senseless noise, drug-induced abandon, a mass hedonistic spectacle for teen-agers. How does a director capture the real experience on film?

Doug Liman's 1998 film *Go* demonstrated the many pitfalls of trying. Although a giant Christmas rave ostensibly motivates the story, *Go* gives us only a few passing glimpses of the dance floor. Worse, a simplistic moral message—there's a price for having too much fun—underlies the entire plot. The only person who we see take ecstasy wakes up shivering and filthy in a heap of garbage. The girl who dabbles in drug dealing is left for dead in a ditch. In the end, rave serves as nothing more than an exotic backdrop for a very conventional story about friendship, love and the daily grind.

Groove, on the other hand, avoids the familiar stereotypes. No one dies of an overdose, no one is arrested for deal-

ing drugs, no one's life is ruined for blowing off a little steam over the weekend. The movie follows the trajectories of various ravers from the beginning to the end of an illegal San Francisco warehouse party. The characters correspond to a typically bizarre cross-section of ravers (many culled directly from the San Francisco underground), including a young DJ from Fresno, an eccentric chemistry grad student, a pixie club-girl named Harmony and a squabbling gay couple celebrating their one-year anniversary. The movie's real star, however, is the party itself, featuring multiple DJs, a wide-ranging assortment of drugs and a lush "chill-out room" done up with some degree of authenticity. Harrison samples from all the major styles of electronic dance music—beatless ambient, disco-influenced house, syncopated jungle and futuristic trance. He shows the passion of ravers for their music, the dedication of DJs to their fans, and otherwise conveys some of the rapturous excitement of a really great party.

As one might expect from such a movie, there's little in the way of overarching plot. Among the movie's swirling mini-plots, the nominal focus is on the chance meeting of ecstasy virgin David Turner and rave veteran Leyla Heydel. After four years in San Francisco, aspiring novelist David finds himself in a dead-end job writing computer manuals, his social life bleak, his literary aspirations a faded memory. As Leyla chaperones David through the ecstasy experience—panic as the drug comes on strong, woozy rapture at its peak, expansive soul-searching later on—he discovers a sense of connection and possibility in his life he had all but forgotten. Moved by David's born-again bliss, Leyla realizes over the course of the night how parties and drugs have prevented her from doing anything with her life. The very epiphany that has freed David, we learn, is the chemical illusion of happiness that's trapping Leyla.

To be fair, David and Leyla come off as just a little too storybook to be believable, and *Groove* contains plenty of other unrealistic and obviously commercial touches. A police officer good-naturedly doesn't break up the

party, and British super-DJ John Digweed (whose five-figure fees are quite beyond the reach of underground enthusiasts) makes a cameo appearance to plug his own album. During one of the movie's lowest points, an ecstatic amateur DJ says to Digweed, "That last song you played was sick. You just can't find that kind of stuff in Fresno." In fact,

How does a film director capture an experience that requires drugs to elicit the full effect?

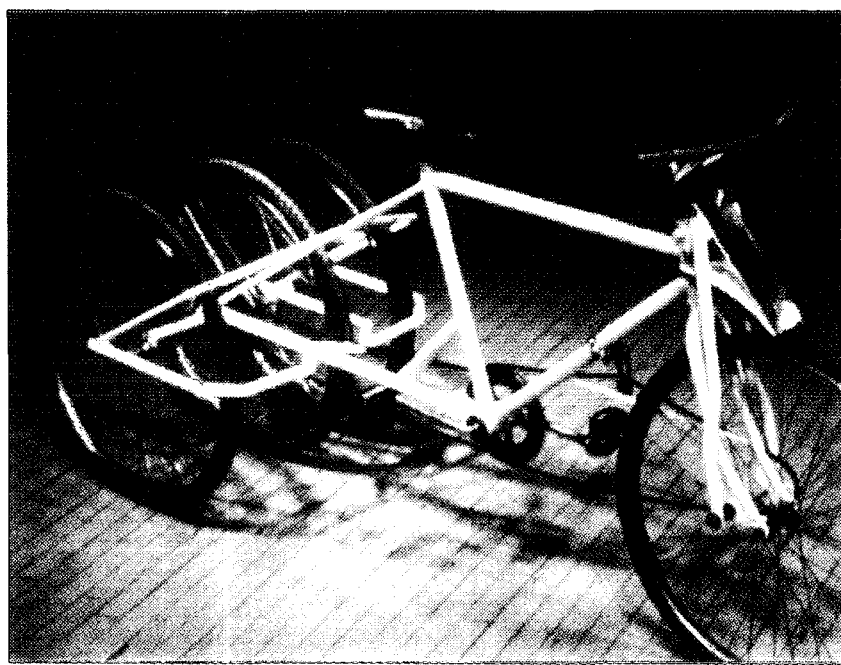
the song was "Heaven Scent," a track from Digweed's *Bedrock* album that reached the Top 40 in the U.K. last year and is available in just about every major record store across the country, even in Fresno.

One readily imagines *Groove*'s excellent soundtrack achieving a similar fate. But commercial success probably won't spell the end of the music or the

culture. Techno, like the underground raves where it was born, does not submit so easily to the marketplace. Dance tracks are made by anonymous studio artists often composing under a dozen or more aliases. Even then, the tracks are just building blocks for a pseudonymous DJ to create a set. The party changes location every week and is orchestrated by mysterious, behind-the-scenes promoters. Unlike rock, which tries to convey meaning through lyrics; or jazz, which aims for tonal complexity; or pop, which simply strives for a memorable melody, techno's *raison d'être* is to backdrop an experience. The dance compilations available at your local Tower Records are a pale shadow of the party they're designed to soundtrack.

The otherworldly tableaux, the strange synergy between drugs and music, the collective high of adrenaline and sweat: What has made rave meaningful for so many people over the past decade can probably never be packaged neatly inside a CD jewel case—or brought to life on the big screen. ■

Jason Sholl, an editorial assistant for *Lingua Franca*, wrote in the May 29 issue about the history of restaurants.



One Step Forward, by Timothy Brower. From *Endgame: Artists Confront the Machine*, at SPACES gallery in Cleveland through August 4.

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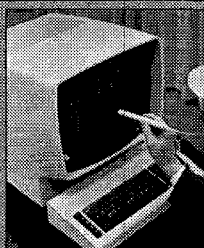
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By Nicole Hollander



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Continued from page 38

spheres of interaction. Strangely both subtle and overt, all of the clues to understanding the event were so much in the fore that it was easy to pass over them as party decorations. A party happened, people danced, and Law Office kept relatively sober and explained to as many as they could the meaning of the event. Basically it was all about being sponsored—by the beer companies that supplied the beer and posters, and by Wu Wear, which supplied the clothing. Also, unspokenly, by the art establishment, which turned out in force to support the party.

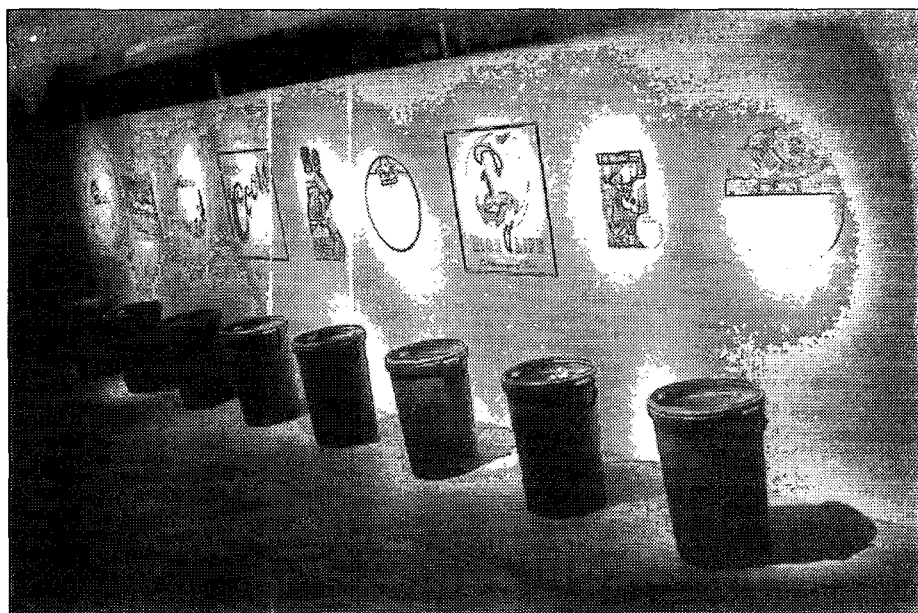
This is where being “established” plays out. Law Office, with a history of fairly jokey and juvenile events, suddenly (well, suddenly after three months of calling and faxing and arranging) had corporate sponsorship.

In an environment where artists bristle at the thought of Phillip Morris sponsoring a museum while gleefully accepting a commission from Absolut, Law Office sought out suspect sponsors. The other sponsor, Wu Wear, happily donated clothing after understanding what the event was about and who it was for. Law Office is quick to point out that the Wu-Tang Clan is an ideal business model for them—an entrepreneurial collection of like-minded individuals spreading their own message.

Law Office played a mix of hip-hop songs designed to get the dance floor packed. The party attracted not only the regular Chicago art crowd, but also an impressive roster of international art world movers and shakers in town for Art Chicago 2000, the annual art fair on Navy Pier. Looking around at a crowd of mostly white art school kids, sprinkled with other ethnicities and older attendees, chugging free low-grade American beer and dancing to hip-hop, I had an unsettled feeling. At once an attempt at providing a utopian moment of synthesis, *Beer Tasting II* also highlighted the inadequacies of the art community: its ability to co-opt the aesthetics and surface of just about any genre without deeper contextualization and especially the highly exclusionary—if not racist—make-up of its constituency.

Several reviews of *Beer Tasting II* have downplayed the art part of the event, even extolling attendees, as Keri Butler did in *nyartsmagazine.com*, not to worry “about the intentions of such an event. There’s no reason to be over analytical—just enjoy the American beer and the company (or companies).” Law Office often brings this surface-only reading down on themselves, what with the humor and sense of play that is embedded in their work. There is a desire not to take them seriously, to let their jokes simply be jokes. Their insistence at *Beer Tasting II* that the garbage pails full of beer are sculpture only clouds the issue. Are they serious? They will tell you that they are. It is a gamble they take.

As a spectator, I sometimes feel like just another warm body to fill a space for Law Office—and thus create a successful happening. I never know how much of their



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LAW OFFICE

It's all about being sponsored.

statements are serious, despite their plainly earnest sincerity. Law Office leaves me disarmed and disoriented just enough to put me on edge. It is a good experience, if uncomfortable. It is good to be reminded that I still have hang-ups. If you forget, that's when the problems really begin rolling in. ■

Karl Erickson is an editor and publisher of *Cakewalk Magazine*.

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Until I began to seriously think about the events propagated by the Law Office, I had thought that the debate over what was high and low art had been squashed and discarded; every cultural product was culture, from Mozart to Miller Lite. It seemed that Warhol with his soup cans and silk-screened portraits had pretty much definitively stated that high was low and vice versa. But think for a moment about the idea of a sculpture being used as porno prop, or curators and foreign gallery owners chugging Old Style and Coors. The old dichotomy rises up again. Law Office, an art collective based in Chicago, does not plunge into some form of pop culture and bring it back as art; what they do is highlight problems in the dichotomy popularly believed to have been solved. With this twist, it seems like a whole new game.

Drawing from models as seemingly diverse as the Wu-Tang Clan, conceptual art and sociology, Law Office is one of those strange and inspiring objects of communal synthesis that doesn't so much break boundaries as push you nose first into them. Sometimes you break through, other times you get a broken nose.

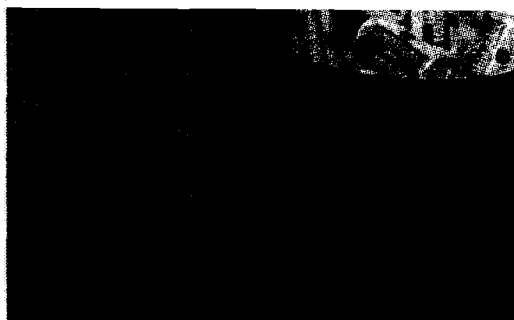
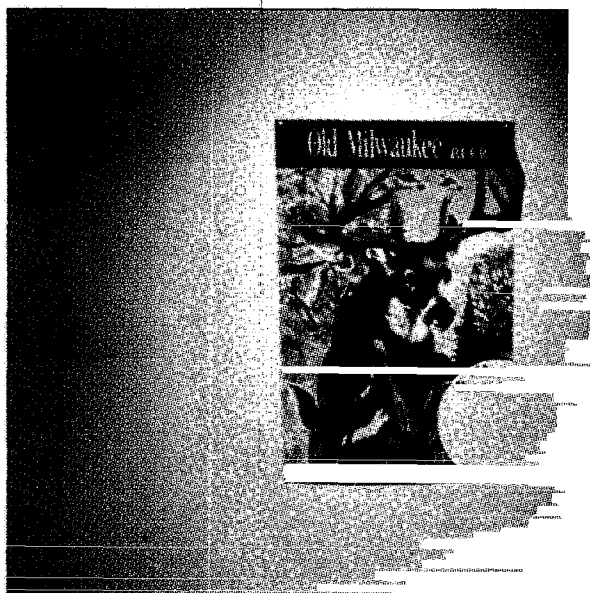
Law Office is composed of the four artists Vince Darmody, Rob Davis, Michael Langlois and Rebekah Levine. All received their BFAs from the School of the Art Institute in Chicago, and come from a diverse

THE WORD IS LAW

BY KARL ERICKSON

background, from the South to working-class Chicago. As an arts collective that sees its role as both facilitator and curator, Law Office has organized several exhibitions which travel the country, promoting party/events that fit well into the Art Happening rubric. Their two most noteworthy events have been *Sex Party* and *Beer Tasting II*. The premise for each is straightforward enough. *Sex Party* was a party situated around porno sets designed by other artists. Partygoers were encouraged to dress in a sleazy fashion. Law Office told me an intrepid group of filmmakers took advantage of the porn sets the day before the party. *Beer Tasting II* consisted of a big open space, garbage cans full of beer, beer signs, some hip-hop mix CDs and the four members of Law Office dressed in clothing provided by Wu Wear, the apparel arm of the Wu-Tang Clan empire. Simple and straightforward enough. Everything they could mean is right there.

But to step back a bit, consider Vince Darmody's initial curatorial step, which more or less spun off into the Law Office collective. *Ten White Male Painters* appeared at the Rainbo, a local bar with an artist clientele. The show consisted of, well, 10 white male painters, all painting the same painting, as dictated by Darmody. That the paintings were mostly jokey and unremarkable is unimportant. It is simplistic to point out



the obvious—that white males dominant the art world, most of them paint and a good many of these paintings are only slight variations on one another. But here is Darmody, saying it and showing it. It is obnoxious, stuffing your face in the problem, disregarding any claims to the contrary, telling you that all of the porno, multiculti stuff is just the flavor of the month. The show embraced the difference between calling a show *Ten Painters* and *Ten White Male Painters*. Does naming the problem, the acknowledgement, do anything? This approach has a real Lenny Bruce feel to it, treading across lines just to see what the border crossings will do. It pushes the problem to the fore and demands a response, if not a solution.

Their latest effort, *Beer Tasting II*, was a strange animal. Beer, hip-hop and conceptual art mingled, mapping out

Continued on page 37